RUGBY—The Game

By OMPAX

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FOREWORD *by*

K. G. MACLEOD, Esq.

Fettes, Cambridge, and Scotland

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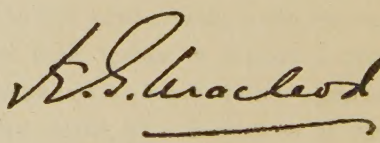
FOREWORD

THE author has asked me to write a foreword to this book on Rugby Football, and I feel confident there are many players who would be more competent to fill the role, as it is now a long time since I had the pleasure of trying to play Rugby, and the game has changed considerably in these last twenty years. In my opinion the game has changed for the better, and let us hope it will keep on improving as time moves on. The fundamental principles of play, however, with which this book deals, remain as important as ever.

The enthusiasm for the game is increasing rapidly, and every year finds more and more schools, clubs, etc., joining up, but, naturally, all these schools, clubs, etc., taking up Rugby cannot have experts to teach them how to play, and it is for those who are not privileged in this way that this book has been written, and it should prove most useful. The elementary principles are thoroughly explained, and any players, be they beginners or old hands, will, I am sure, profit by reading this book. I know in the North of Scotland there are many players brim full of enthusiasm, yet have rarely a chance of seeing good football, get no good coaching, and are merely standing still so far as improvement is concerned. To them and to those similarly placed this book should prove a decided help.

I refrain from falling into the old pitfall of saying, "In our day, etc.," but I should like to make one or two remarks on straight running. In 1905, New Zealand sent over a team, and I recollect very vividly what an impression this side made upon me. Never before, nor since, have I seen such straight running in attack and never did I see backs stand so close to each other. The result was great speed in passing the ball and great accuracy in handling. Too often nowadays backs stand yards too far apart, resulting in slowness of movement, inaccuracy in handling, lobbing of passes, etc. Once a side has the initiative and attacking, there is scarcely any limit to the closeness three-quarters can be to one another, provided the attackers are sufficiently clever to prevent any defender tackling two attackers. Of course, I make an exception of the stand-off half. He must not be too close to the scrum half, as he is the pivot of the attack and must have a certain amount of room in which to manoeuvre in order to start the attack in the manner he wishes.

This book has my very best wishes, and may it help many to understand the great game better and improve their play.



September, 1927.

CHAPTER I.

THE GAME

RUGBY is played with fifteen players a-side. The other essentials are a Rugby football to play with, and a field to play on.

There are no rules laid down how these fifteen men are to be arranged. Rules are laid down as to what constitutes a score against the other side, but the fifteen men can, within the Rules of the Game, choose their own methods how they will gain these scores. The point to be realised is that the whole fifteen men are involved, and that the whole fifteen must plan and work together in order to attain their object. The object of the game is to outwit the other fifteen men and to register scores against them. It is not individual pace or prowess which scores in Rugby, but the side, *i.e.*, the whole fifteen men working together.

Rugby Football is a form of play, a mental and physical exercise, which is at the same time a mental and physical stimulus. The child is encouraged to play and is given a ball to play with in order that it may develop its individuality, and at the same time develop its physical strength by crawling about and exercising its limbs.

Rugby Football is merely an advanced form of play —a mental exercise requiring physical exertion to carry it out ; but to the individual play of the child is added the necessity of combining with others and of outwitting opponents. This problem of how best to combine with

others in order to defeat the combined intelligence of opponents calls for the active use of the brain working on a clear understanding of the fundamental principles of play. In Rugby Football, then, you are given fifteen men a side, a Rugby football, and a field to play on, and the game is for each side of fifteen men to use the materials which they are given in order to outwit the other fifteen and register scores against them. That is to say, Rugby is primarily a game of the wits, the working out of schemes for the different methods by which fifteen men can be used to defeat the schemes of other fifteen men. It is the use of the brain and the thinking faculties which make the opportunities to score, and the use of the limbs which turns these opportunities into scores. It is just because the playing of it combines to such a high degree brains and physical fitness that Rugby is such a supreme form of play.

The brains of the players must, however, have something to work on, an understanding of the principles of play. In other words, before players can work together as a side they must be intimately familiar with the materials which they are given to play with, *viz.*, the field of play, and a Rugby football. A great many boys learn most of what they know of the game by being put into a side and given the general idea and left to pick up the rest for themselves. They are made to run before they have learned to walk, and they probably never really perfect themselves in the first steps.

Much of Rugby can be learned quite apart from playing in actual games, and, so far as schoolboys are concerned, should be learned before they are too heavily involved in matches. Matches may be regarded as examinations,

tests to see how much the pupil has learned, and how far he can apply what he has learned. But one does not learn by examinations, except in so far as one applies knowledge already acquired to new problems set by the examiners. So in Rugby the first steps have to be learned and the underlying principles of the game understood and assimilated before the pupil should be asked to apply his knowledge in matches. Knowledge and understanding of the elementary fundamentals may make all the difference between merely playing Rugby Football and playing it well, or between playing it dully and without enthusiasm and playing it keenly with the joy of effort and the quick use of the brain.

There are some things more important to certain players than to others, but a knowledge of the field of play and of a Rugby football are essential to everyone, no matter where he plays in the side, and these should be acquired before attempting to play. Of these, a knowledge of the field of play and of the direction of movement on it is the more neglected to-day. To obtain a proper view of why this emphasis must be put upon the direction of movement in modern Rugby, it is necessary to understand how present-day methods and formations have developed. From a short survey of the development of Rugby it will be seen why a knowledge of the field of play is so important and its relation to the direction of the players' movements on it.

CHAPTER II.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE GAME

B.C. TO 1871

RUGBY Football takes its name from Rugby School, because it developed from the Rugby School game as played in the early nineteenth century. The distinguishing characteristic of Rugby Football is that the ball, which is oval, may be carried and passed by hand. The idea of playing games with a ball is so familiar to us that we seldom stop to enquire how the game originated, and therefore the earlier origins of football will be shortly traced in order to trace the development of Rugby.

The use of a ball to play with can be traced in classical times, but there is little or no real trace of a ball game, that is, one side striving against another side. Grecian maidens played ball. The Romans had an inflated bladder which apparently was knocked up by hand, but it was probably the forerunner, not of Rugby Football but of the medicine ball with which the present-day physical culture expert exercises his pupils. Its purpose was the same then as now, namely, the reduction of the figure, and as a help to the further digestion of good food. But it was in no sense a game. The only trace of a game is a reference to a contest in which a ball was used and which involved the carrying of the ball over something equivalent to modern goal lines. Some such

contest may have been indulged in in Roman Britain, and may have been the source of mediæval football.

In our own country there are early traces of football as a game. From the reign of Edward II. onwards there are many recorded efforts to put it down by law. The game was sufficiently widespread and popular in these days to come under the ban of the Law, the reason being that football was the game of the vulgar and vulgar manhood was required to practise the art of war. The King and his Barons required bowmen and spearmen, not footballers. On one day in the year, however, on Shrove Tuesday, the last day of Carnival, the people had liberty to play football, and annually both in England and Scotland some special form of football was played on that day, and there are towns in which the practice is still kept up.

What the game was exactly is not clearly traceable. It was regarded by the knightly classes as disreputable and not fit for gentlemen because of its violence. It was dangerous to life and limb. It was also destructive to property when played through the streets of a town; and even to-day the cautious shopkeeper in towns where the old game survives follows the example of his ancestors and puts up his shutters to prevent damage to his property when the old town game is played through the streets.

The game itself, if we are to judge by the records of damage and the present-day survivals, must have been a mass performance, one glorious enormous scrum. There would be no limit to the numbers playing; one quarter of a town would play against another quarter; anyone who cared would join in. The ball would be thrown in at, say, the market-place, and the whole mass would struggle for possession and try to force a passage

to their respective goals. The goals would be some well-defined village feature—a river, the horse pond, or some other natural feature at either end of the town. The picture of the whole able-bodied male population struggling, hacking, tripping, or otherwise forcing a passage through a mass of opponents in the narrow streets of an old town may well convince us that football in these days was violent, dangerous to life and limb, destructive to property, and gloriously disreputable.

Shakespeare, who seems to have known something about everything, bears this out, for in *King Lear*, when Oswald the Steward gets uppish and declares that he will not be struck by Lear, Kent trips him up with the words : —" Nor tripped neither, you base football player."

Curiously enough, tripping was an integral part of early Rugby ; but this mediaeval football game was not Rugby, neither was it Association. In that the ball could be carried in the hand, a claim that it is the origin of Rugby may be made, but not stretched too far, although the origin of the scrum may be suggested. Little more can be claimed than that it proves the love of manhood for violent exercise ; the use of a ball as a pretext for violent exercise ; and that exercise taking the form of a game or contest in which one side played against another.

In the early nineteenth century the violent game is to be traced, not among the populace, but among the public schools. It had become gentlemanly. In those days playing fields were scarce, cloisters and school yards were the usual exercise grounds, but the love of a violent game persisted and each school adapted its game to its facilities.

At Rugby School the school "Big-side" game was played more or less along the old lines of one struggling mass shoving against another struggling mass, the ball being propelled by the feet. The ball could be caught in the hands, but the catcher had to step back and kick it. He was not allowed to run forward with it. But one afternoon in the latter part of 1823 a boy named William Webb Ellis, caught the ball and, instead of kicking it, ran with it in his hands towards his opponents' goal. What made him do it, no one can tell—it may have been conscious creative intelligence on his part, or he may have lost his head. At anyrate, on that afternoon the individual broke away from the mass and a new football epoch was born.

The innovation was not officially recognised at Rugby until 1842, but from that date the Rugby School game permitted a player to run with the ball in his hands, and Rugby Football as a distinct game came into existence and has ever since retained the name of the school which gave it birth. The Rugby idea spread gradually to other schools. Boys leaving school carried the new game to different parts of the country, and in due course Old Boys' Clubs sprang up. But the game as then played was not Rugby as we know it — numbers were not limited, although twenty a side became the usual; individual play was undeveloped; present-day formations were unknown; fields were inadequate and not properly marked off—we read of players having to dodge about among the spectators—and rules were vague and varied. Enthusiasm for the game was, however, abundant, and despite its embryonic condition and the confusion of the rules, Scottish en-

thusiasts challenged England in 1871. That, the beginning of international relations, was a big step forward.

Photographs of the teams in that match show that they played in jerseys similar to present-day jerseys, but in long white trousers, some tucked into their boots, and some tucked into their socks ; some of the boots were elastic-sided ones ; and heavy beards and whiskers make some of the players, although in their early twenties, look like elderly gentlemen. To modern eyes a game in those days would hardly have been an edifying spectacle. Of the twenty a-side, fifteen at least were forwards. The outsides were merely defenders. The attack was done by the forwards. Any passing that was done was done by the forwards, not by the backs. The forwards did not pack low, as they do to-day, but shoved against one another in a more or less upright position. The only way of getting the ball out of this mass of thirty forwards was by hacking until the ball was forced into the open, while tripping was a legitimate form of tackling. Once the ball was loose, the forwards attacked by dribbling, running or drop-kicking, and the object of the game was to score goals. A run-in, as the modern try was called, only entitled the successful side to a try-at-goal, and up till 1875 only goals counted. The dropped goal and the placed goal were at a premium in these days.

The game had now, however, reached the stage when something had to be done about it. There was no common code of rules, each club or each district played according to its own ideas, and when they met the respective captains arranged how they should play, and they

also settled by agreement any points of dispute which arose in the course of play. Referees were unknown.

A controlling body which would settle the rules and guide the development of the game became necessary, and in 1871 the Rugby Union was formed. That brings us to the beginning of modern Rugby Football.

CHAPTER III.

DEVELOPMENT FROM 1871 TO THE PRESENT DAY

IN 1871 there were no controlling bodies in the separate countries, but there were sufficient Rugby Clubs to form a Union by the countries combining together. Each country, however, as the game developed within its borders, set up its own controlling body, and the Scottish Rugby Union was formed in 1873, the Irish in 1874, and the Welsh in 1880.

The first step by the Rugby Union was to make rules, one of which had an immediate influence on the game, for hacking and tripping were abolished.

The game at this period was played with twenty players a-side, fifteen of whom were forwards. The five backs usually consisted of two halves and three full-backs. One of these full-backs got into the habit of standing a little in front of the other two, and it is from this man that the present-day three-quarter line has developed, but in those days his function was purely defensive.

The principal method of getting the ball loose from the scrum was by hacking. Consequently, when hacking was abolished, there remained no method of getting the ball loose except pushing the opposition off their feet. This resulted in deadly dull shoving matches.

Something had to be done to save the game, and it was decided to reduce the number of forwards by reducing

the number of players to fifteen a side. The original fifteen a-side formation was two full-backs, one three-quarter (to use the modern term), two halves and ten forwards. The forwards, along with the two halves, were the attackers. Fast dribbling forwards became the order of the day, and the forwards also developed passing and handling. To cope with such strong attacking forwards, the single defensive three-quarter was useless, and the next change was made by bringing forward one of the two full backs to help him in defence. The formation then became one full back, two three-quarters, two halves, and ten forwards.

The idea of heeling the ball out to the backs was not yet born, and the two three-quarters were still purely defensive. The back division as a weapon of attack had not yet come into existence. One day, however, a bright idea struck a half-back, and he passed the ball to one of his three-quarters to enable him to carry on an attack. It is a very ordinary idea to us to-day, but about 1880 the idea of using the three-quarters for attack was a complete innovation and it altered the whole conception of play.

The idea was at once further developed by players realising that to make passing useful it was necessary to put the receiver of the pass into a favourable position to attack. This is a point not fully realised by many players to-day. Much energy is wasted in passing which is quite useless because no opening has been made for the receiver of the pass. But the point to be noticed is that the whole idea of passing to the three-quarters, and of making openings for them, was to give them chances of scoring. That is to say, the purpose of the three-

quarter line now definitely became to score, instead of merely to prevent scores, to attack instead of to defend.

The next step was to increase the power of this new-found scoring machine by adding to it, and this time a player was taken from the pack. And so the formation now became one full-back, three three-quarters, two halves and nine forwards.

With only three three-quarters occupying the breadth of the field the principle of three-quarter passing was to pass with wide passes. There was room for individual effort supplemented by long passing, but obviously, the wider the passes the more inaccurate they tend to become, and in Wales further experiments in the use of the three-quarter line were being tried and tested.

In Wales they realised that short passes were quicker and more accurate, and as there was sufficient breadth in the field of play, they adopted a line of four three-quarters, the additional man being taken from the pack. They soon proved that by short accurate passing and straight running they could develop far more deadly combination in attack than under the three three-quarter system, and in the season 1892-93 they defeated Scotland, England and Ireland in turn, and the other countries in due course adopted the four three-quarter formation. Again the scoring power of the three-quarter line had been developed, and the team formation now became one full back, four three-quarters, two halves and eight forwards.

This is the accepted formation of a Rugby side to-day ; but if the addition of an extra three-quarter has in the past proved on each occasion to increase the scoring power of the side, why should not another be added ?

The principal reason is that the breadth of the field is fixed and there is no more room. Watch any average club three-quarter line to-day, and you will see that the wing three-quarters are time and again forced on to the touch-line without any room in which to manoeuvre, A line of four three-quarters, to be an efficient attacking instrument, must so run that it gives its wing players room to move. That can only be done by accurate passing and straight running—that is, keeping the movement of the line straight down the field, and not at an angle across the field. Most club three-quarters find the field too narrow for them as it is, but that is the result of inefficiency in their play and not of the four three-quarter system.

The New Zealanders have developed the back-division formation a step further, and have added yet another man to it by taking one away from the pack. They play one full back, three three-quarters, two five-eights, two halves and seven forwards.

It does not matter much what they call them, they play eight backs and seven forwards as compared with our seven backs and eight forwards. Following out the idea of the development of the three-quarter line which has just been traced, it would be simpler to say that the extra man has been added to the halves, thus making three halves and four three-quarters. In effect, another man has been crowded into the space available in the breadth of the field, and the success of this formation depends on a high degree of skill and intimacy of co-operation—a higher degree of skill and co-operation, in fact, than is possible for the ordinary club side of cheerful players. It is not likely, therefore, that Rugby

in this country will adopt the New Zealand formation, and the accepted Rugby formation to-day is one full back, four three-quarters, two halves and eight forwards.

From what has been written it will have been seen that the development of Rugby since it became fifteen a-side is the story of the development of the three-quarter line from a single defensive player to a line of four players built essentially for attack. The effect on the game of this change has been to alter the emphasis on the different parts of the team. Fifty years ago Rugby was entirely a forward game, with one or two odd players behind the scrum to stop the rushes of the opposing forwards. To-day it is a well-balanced combination of backs and forwards, with the scoring emphasis on the backs rather than on the forwards. The balance at one time swung too far, and for some years the forwards were regarded too much merely as a machine to get the ball for the backs. The ideal, however, is to combine modern scoring backs with forwards who can rival the old packs, not only in scrummaging, but in fast dribbling and handling, and so get the co-operation of the whole side both in attack and defence.

The success of any side playing under the four three-quarter system depends, first and foremost, on an understanding of the field of play and of how to make the best use of the space available in order to make progress towards the opponents' goal. Put shortly, this is the problem of Running Straight, and the development of the present-day Rugby formation has been traced not merely to give the necessary background of history, but to indicate how the four three-quarter system has grown up and the difficulties it has brought with it. The

principal difficulty is that of space. The solution of that difficulty is that every player should use the space available to the best advantage for the rest of the side, and that he should always move in the right direction. That seems simple, but it is not ; in fact, it is at the root of the difficulty of playing Rugby well and of getting the best out of it. And so the first thing to be done is to get some conception of the geography of the field of play. There are only two things required for the game—a field of play and a Rugby football, and it behoves everyone who would desire to play to understand both.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FIELD OF PLAY

(1) *Direction of Movement*

THE feature which distinguishes modern Rugby most particularly from the older types of play is a three-quarter line of four players. The most evident weakness of modern Rugby is the almost universal inability to use a four three-quarter line efficiently.

The four three-quarter system was born after much thought and labour in Wales in the early nineties. Because of the trouble and thought and persevering practice expended upon it, the early Welsh exponents brought the system to such a pitch of perfection that they beat all-comers, and the other nations adopted the Welsh system. In these days it was new, and its peculiar features had to be learnt, thoroughly understood, and assiduously practised. To-day, the four three-quarter system is taken for granted. Consequently, its special features are, in the majority of cases, neither learnt, thoroughly understood, nor assiduously practised. They are taken for granted ; one plays three-quarter and is given, or picks up, a vague or general idea of what a three-quarter is supposed to do, but, to judge by results anyway, few are given, or pick up, any intelligent or accurate idea of how to do it. One is told to run straight, but what running straight means is not explained and

demonstrated unless one has the good fortune to learn under skilled Games Masters.

It is not necessary to trace in further detail how Rugby has developed from a purely forward game with masses of attacking forwards, and only a few defensive backs, into a game in which the back-division is the main scoring weapon, beyond pointing out that when there were only a few backs the emphasis was on the individual prowess of each, not on the combined effort of all ; and that with only three three-quarters on the field individuality had still much scope, and that combination was possible by means of long, wide passes. The field was wide enough to allow it.

The introduction of a fourth three-quarter changed all that. The space which each three-quarter had to move freely in was reduced. Further, his colleagues were now quite close to him, and he had to consider them and arrange his movements to suit them. The defending three-quarter line also had now four players in it, and the gaps between them were less than they had been before, and consequently the problem was how to beat the defence with relatively less space to work in than there was before.

The solution came by the development of combined efforts as distinct from individual ones, and the success of these combined efforts was found to be dependent on two things, viz., short passing and straight running. Straight running really means keeping a combined movement going in the right direction, that is to say, towards the opponents' goal line and not across the field to the touch line.; and to succeed in this it is essential for those who are learning to play Rugby to understand what may

be called the geography of the field of play, and the vital relation of the player's movement to it.

One of the essential foundations on which good play must be built is a clear conception of the geography of the field and the player's position on the field. That is to say, to obtain the best results of his efforts a player must acquire mentally an instinctive knowledge of how he is placed in relation to the field of play and to the other players on it. The object of this is that he may always and at once take the shortest or most direct route for whatever point he may wish to reach. The more instinctive the knowledge becomes, the quicker will his actions be.

This knowledge of the geography of the field lies at the root of that great principle of good play in Rugby, viz., running straight.

Straight running, or the keeping of a movement down the field straight, is an absolute necessity to success in modern Rugby. In the old days there was not the same difficulty in achieving it as there is to-day. Originally, the forwards attacked, and their movement was naturally straight ahead, just as the movement of a forward rush is to-day. It is when you consider passing movements that the problem of direction arises, for the receiver of a pass is behind the giver of the pass, and is usually slightly at an angle to him. Hence the receiver of a pass starts off running obliquely—across the field instead of straight down the field. That oblique movement did not matter so much in the days of three three-quarters as it does to-day, because there was more room on the field for the wing player to get round, although even then it was important.

With the adoption of a line of four three-quarters, however, the necessity of running straight became vital to back-division movements. For now there was, both relatively and in actual fact, less room for the wing. The width of the field remained the same, but now four players have to manoeuvre in the same space as three had previously. And so, instead of merely getting the ball out quickly and accurately to the wing in order that he, with the space at his disposal, might either get round or dodge the opposing wing, steps must now be taken *in the centre* to ensure that the movement goes straight, and thereby gives each player the maximum of room to work in. The problem of the modern passing game is how to prevent a passing movement from moving across the field. If it merely moves across the field it is not going forward—towards the opponents' line—and, further, every step taken reduces the space in which the wing player can move. Further, as will be seen later, the movement across the field does not draw the defence out of position. In short, it accomplishes nothing, and only too frequently loses ground, instead of gaining it, for the attacking side.

The problem of keeping a passing movement straight is a big one, and the failure to realise it is the ruin of the four three-quarter system.

The field of play is rectangular and, therefore, the line of attack is the straight line down the field, and the straight line is the shortest line between any two points. Look at the field of play then and realise what that means.

The straight line of attack is obviously a line at right angles to the goal line, but the average attack does not follow that line: it moves obliquely across the field to the

touchline, as illustrated below. Look at Figure 1. The players illustrated have lost their sense of direction, or, in other words, have failed to realise the direction of their movements in relation to the field of play, and the result is that no ground has been gained, although an attractive passing run may have been executed. The arrows indicating the movements of 1, 2, and 3 have been prolonged beyond the point at which they would have passed, in order to show more clearly the direction in which they are running. An actual passing run would probably end about the head of arrow marked 4.

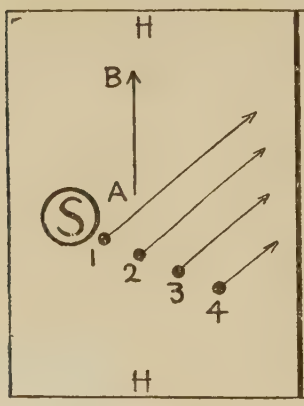


FIG. 1.

S. is the scrum, and 1, 2, 3, 4 are the stand-off half and three-quarters. They have lost direction, and are running towards the touch-line, as shown by the oblique arrows. The direction of the movement should be A—B.

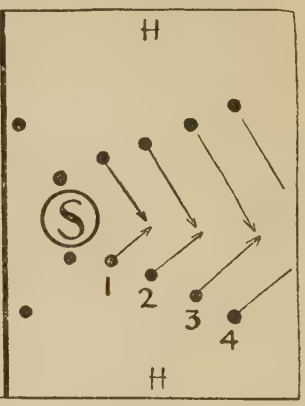


FIG. 2.

Here, as in Fig. 1, the movement is oblique; and unless it is straightened up, the opposing backs will meet at an angle, as shown, and no progress will be made.

What happens is that the defending line of three-quarters has come up to bar the way in approximately a straight line across the field, and the attackers have merely run across the face of the defending line, whereas the whole object of attack is at least to gain ground, and, if possible, to pass through the defending line. By the run across the field neither of these objects is achieved.

Nothing is more common, nothing more easy than running across the field, and nothing is more ineffective and purposeless. How then does it start?

When the ball is put into the scrum the backs are lined out from the scrum and are technically facing straight to their opponents' goal line, but as soon as passing commences, and the ball is passed backward, the direction in which they face becomes slightly altered. The very act of passing, or taking the pass, tends to make each player lose his sense of direction and move obliquely.

The position of the stand-off or outside half has a lot to do with this change of direction, but that will be dealt with later. In the meantime the general principle is what matters.

The attackers have now been given an oblique direction. On the other hand, the defence is coming towards them at approximately the same but opposite angle, as shown in Figure 2.

Both attack and defence are running obliquely, and if they continue in their respective tracks they will meet at an angle. That angle is the important thing to realise. If the movement is to be kept straight that angle must be broken; if it is not broken, but the oblique line continued, the movement will merely cross the field and not move forward.

Take the movement of C (1), the centre next to the stand-off half. Having received the ball from the stand-off half, he runs on, knowing that D (1) is bearing down in the direction of his left shoulder, and therefore feels that there is no road that way, but he sees open space in front of him and so runs on in the line in which he is going (*i.e.*, slightly to the right) until he is challenged, and then he passes, but his route has really been across the face of his opponents' line of defence, not through it, and he has forced his own line to run further across than before.

The field as C (1) sees it is shown in Fig. 3.

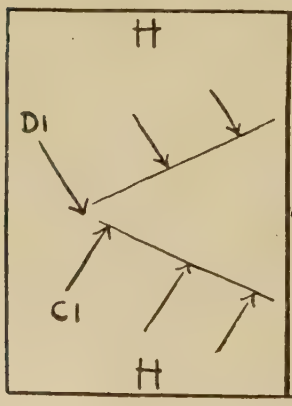


FIG. 3.

C 1 is the centre three quarter, next to the stand-off half. This shows the field from his point of view when attacked by D 1. He instinctively moves to the right.

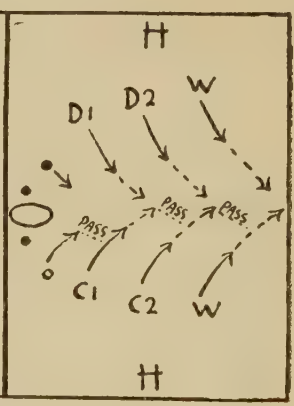


FIG. 4.

This shows how the side-ways movement goes on as the ball is passed to C 2 and then to the wing. The movement ends in touch and practically no ground is gained.

He is very conscious of D (1), and tries to get away from him, but the solid line of defenders on his left is advancing rapidly. His only road is to the right, and he takes it before passing to his neighbour, whom he has also forced to run to the right. D (2), if he has any sense, does not bother with C (1) but leaves him to D (1), and the result is that the attacking three-quarters follow a route indicated by the dotted lines and crowd themselves on the touch-line, without drawing a man out of position in the defence as shown in Fig. 4.

Notice that the attack has not advanced beyond a line drawn across the field through the middle of the scrum. The move started where the ball went into the scrum. It ended on the touch-line, if anything behind the spot where the scrum was formed. There has been much running and passing, but not a yard has been gained.

In this illustration, and it can be seen every Saturday at any club game, C (1), the first centre three-quarter, failed to realise his position and movement in relation to the lie of the field. He knew there was an opponent on his left ready to tackle him, he saw a few more yards clear ahead of him and ran on as far as he could ; but he was not making ground as he thought he was, he was merely running across the field and across the enemy's front. Because of his lack of instinct for the geography of the field, it was all he could do. He did not know how to get straight, or how to keep the movement of the line straight.

How is running across the field to be avoided ? How can a player get straight when once he has started obliquely, and how can the movement of the backs in attack be kept straight ? For running straight is more

than a mere individual effort: it refers to the whole attacking movement.

The first thing to do is to get a mental picture of how two opposing three-quarter lines would meet if both continued moving at the angle at which they started (see Fig. 5).

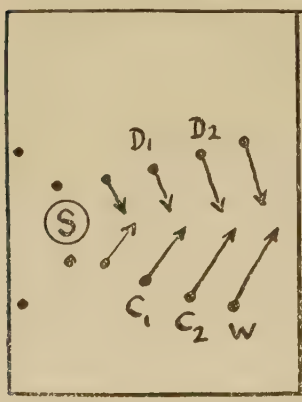


FIG. 5.

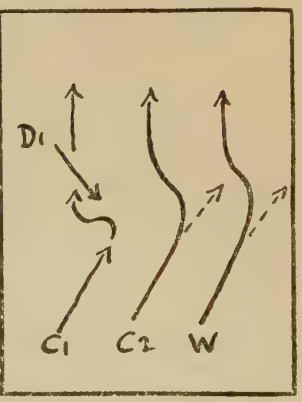


FIG. 6.

Now, the shortest line between C 1 and D 1, or between any of the pairs of opposing players, is the straight line between forming the base of the triangle, and that would be the straightest and most direct route to the opponents' line. But simply to run straight on that line would not deceive the opposition, or draw it out of position. Therefore, the problem is how to run straight, and at the same time beat your opponent. The solution lies in beating your opponent in such a way that you return to the straight line immediately thereafter, as shown in Fig. 6.

That is to say, C 1 and D 1 approach one another at an angle. Just before they meet, C1, who is attacking, and running to the right, suddenly stops running to the right, throws his balance to the left, and goes off to the leftward of his previous line, and that brings him back approximately on to a straight line between his original position and the opponents' goal line.

I used the expression "suddenly stops running to the right," for that is what happens, but each man may have his own method of doing it—one as his right foot comes forward in its stride may jam it hard down and go off to the left straight away ; another may break his stride with a balance step and then do the same thing, but less abruptly ; while in some the movement is so easy that it is difficult to say how it is done. However it is done, it should be done at as nearly full speed as possible. It can be practised, and should be diligently practised, breaking both to left and to right, for although the illustration is that of a player moving to the right and breaking to the left, the principle applies in both cases.

Further, by breaking the angle at which he is running and getting back to the straight line again, the player will bring the whole line into a straight forward direction, and its movement will be forward and not across the field, for his colleagues will have to follow him if they are to be up to take his pass. This is illustrated by the lines of the movement of the other centre and the wing in the diagram. I have endangered the clearness of the diagram by adding dotted lines to represent the direction of the movement of the line if C 1 had not broken the oblique line on which he started, so that the contrast between a

movement which goes straight down the field and one that goes across the field may be realised.

In order to gain the instinct for straight-running, the fundamental thing to remember is, as we have seen, that two players approach one another at an angle, which must be broken by a sudden change of direction. This change of direction must be made before your opponent has time to change direction also, otherwise he will tackle you.

The movement reduces itself to a question of balance. The attacking player, moving to the right, suddenly throws his balance to the left ; the defending player, coming down on him on his left, has to check himself, and, in turn, throw his weight to his right. That takes an appreciable fraction of a second, and in order to make a successful tackle he must be able to throw his weight into the tackle. If he is only half round he may touch the attacker, but his tackle will have no power and can be brushed aside.

Therefore, the success of the move depends on timing the change of direction at the right moment—not too near the opponent or there will not be room to pass him ; and not far enough away to allow him to change direction also and counter the move. The change of direction should be made at the last moment, but when that last moment comes is a matter for the experience and instinct of each player. The attacking player, by watching his opponent carefully, can often spot the moment his opponent has overrun him, or is on the wrong balance, or the wrong foot even. Then he breaks, and must break at once.

Getting Straight Before Passing.

The examples taken have referred chiefly to a centre going through himself, but the same principle applies (and applies to every player) if he merely intends to pass, viz., to change direction and get straight before passing. The importance of this is great, and is made all the more important by the fact that so few players seem to realise it and practise it. By changing direction and getting straight before passing you definitely pull up your opposite number and put him momentarily out of action. By not doing so, and passing at the same angle as that at which you are running, you do not put your opponent out of action, but leave him free to run on and embarrass your colleagues.

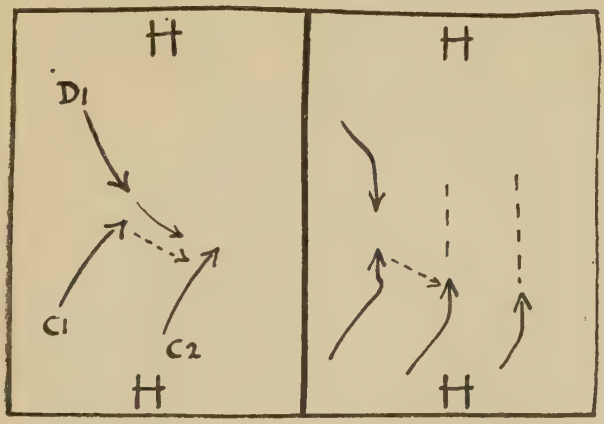


FIG. 7.

FIG. 8.

In Figure 7, C 1, after running obliquely, passes without making any change of direction, and D can run on in

practically the same line as the flight of the ball and either challenge C 2, or back up his colleagues right across the field ; whereas if C 1 had got straight before passing the position would have been as in Figure 8, and D would have been compelled to draw up in case C went through.

Getting straight before passing is absolutely essential to successful back-division attacking movements. If the stand-off half and centre three-quarters merely run and pass without breaking the angle at which they are running, the whole line merely moves across the field, using up valuable space without ground being gained, and, worse still, the whole of the defence is left free to bottle the attack.

Getting straight before passing is just as essential to forwards as to backs. Forwards, as a rule, are absolutely guileless when they find the ball in their hands, and great opportunities are thrown away. They should all practise giving dummies until they instinctively break the angle of their running before they pass.

So far only the direction of back-division attacking movement has been dealt with, and that only in its general principles, but if the general principle is grasped each player will work out his own application of it. If the general principle is not grasped, then no amount of print will be of any use to a player. Certainly no one can sit down and explain in detail every possible move in the game, and no one ever really learns much from a book on games except the general principles. Each works out these principles for himself.

Certain points must be emphasised, however, and the first is that in the four three-quarter game the attack must be made, or made possible, by the centres, *i.e.*,

stand-off half and the centre three-quarters. Secondly, the movement of that attack must be kept straight, *i.e.*, parallel to the touchlines, not obliquely towards them. Thirdly, the pace of the attack must be as fast as possible. This is not merely a matter of individual speed, but of each player acting quickly, and the first essential is that each back shall take his pass going hard, not standing still.

This latter point is particularly important at stand-off half, and brings us to the question of his position. In order to get up pace before receiving his pass from the scrum half, the stand-off half lies a little deep, that is to say, further behind the scrum half than the first centre lies behind the outside half. He should have to race in to get his pass, and thus have his pace up by the time he receives it. He lies a little deeper than the others for another reason also, for the stand-off half has a particular duty to try to deceive the opposition in regard to his movements. Therefore he must be prepared to go either right or left behind the scrum. To do so he must be much more nearly straight behind the scrum half than, say, the centres are behind him, or behind one another.

This position of the stand-off half raises a point in regard to running straight. Because he lies so directly behind the scrum he must start running obliquely in order to get room. Consequently, the centre next to him must take care not to stand too near to him. If he stands too near, the stand-off half will make him run obliquely. The centre should be far enough away to allow the stand-off half room to get into the open. Then he himself will have room to come in straight to take a pass from the half. The stand-off half is really the pivot

of the whole line. If his movement is bad it makes it all the more difficult for the centres to do their job.

Up till now, only a straight break through by a centre beating his man, and the straightforward movement in which each man draws his own man before passing, have been illustrated, but the underlying principles of other more complicated moves are the same ; for instance, one or more changes of direction in order to draw two, or even more, men before passing. If two men are drawn on to one attacker then the attack will have a man over, and this is a result to be aimed at. The stand-off half can, for instance, tempt both the opposing stand-off half and one of the centres to close in on him before he passes. That should give the second centre a clear break through. All these tricks are based on sudden changes of direction, coupled with a clear conception of one's position and one's direction in relation to the field of play.

The object to be achieved is that every player should be able to realise at once in what direction he is running ; and in what direction he should run in order to keep the movement straight and so to give the man to whom he is going to pass the best chance. It may appear a simple thing for a player to know in what direction he is running, but it is not. In the heat of a game a player is tempted to run towards the space where he sees no opponents, but as his opponents are, as a rule, approximately in a line across the field between him and their own goal line, it stands to reason that if he goes for the space where he sees no opponents, he will not be running in the direction of their goal line. In nine cases out of ten he will be running across the face of his opponents and towards the touch line, not the goal line. That is to say, the direction

of his movement, and, in consequence, the movements of his colleagues, will be obliquely across the field and not straight down the field.

The best way of getting a practical demonstration is to watch an ordinary side from behind the goal posts. From behind the goal posts you get a view of the side's movements in relation to the straight line up and down the field. Watch the back division in front of you, and almost invariably it will be seen that the direction of its movement is across the field towards the touch-line. Remember that the breadth of the field is limited, and if the wing player is to get a chance of swerving or dodging he must be given some room to dodge in, and notice how, as man after man moves across the field towards the touch-line the space left for the wing three-quarter disappears until ultimately he is crowded out.

Having got a clear idea of that, go and watch a really good back division do the same thing, and you will see the stand-off half start running obliquely (for reasons already indicated) but almost invariably square up by breaking into the straight before passing ; that enables the centre to come up straight to take his pass ; he may dodge or swerve, but will not throw the direction of the line out of the straight, and the whole line will move at approximately right angles to the goal line instead of across the field towards the touch-line, and everyone will have plenty of room in which to move.

One of the first things, then, to acquire in Rugby is an instinct as to the direction in which you are running. To know exactly how you are running in relation to the touch-lines and the other players on the field is one of the main secrets of success in the game, and one of the per-

petual mental exercises in playing it. Half the fun of playing Rugby lies in outwitting one's opponents, and the player who has always, no matter what is happening in the game, a clear idea of where he is and where he is going stands a good chance of having that satisfaction.

CHAPTER V.

THE FIELD OF PLAY—contd.

(2) *Rapidity of Movement*

"WHEN we talk of a team taking advantage of its opportunities, we really mean that that team wastes fewer feet than its rival."—*J. E. Raphael.*

Having acquired an instinct for the geography of the field and a sense of direction, consider the field in terms of time and distance, for it is this relation between time and distance which makes the difference between a good player, or a good side, and an indifferent one. The problem resolves itself into realising the value of a fraction of a second in terms of yards. Thus :—

A man who covers 100 yards in 10 seconds, covers 10 yards in one second.

Many can, in a desperate effort, cover ten yards in one second who are quite incapable of doing 100 yards in 10 seconds, but the average player will cover the ground at the rate of 100 yards in 12 seconds, or $8\frac{1}{2}$ yards per second. For simplicity, take it as 96 yards in 12 seconds, 8 yards in one second, and 2 yards in a quarter of a second, and think it out.

In a second you get eight yards nearer your opponent, or he gets eight yards nearer you ; or you get eight yards further away from him, or he gets eight yards away from you. In eight yards you have plenty of room to swerve,

to kick to touch, to make an opening, or to pass. Waste that second, and you can do none of these things—your opponent has tackled you. A second may seem a long time, but test it for yourselves. A quick glance round to see where your colleagues are, a momentary hesitation whether to pass or go on yourself, and you have thrown away an advantage—your opponents are so many yards nearer you than they need have been.

It may be thought that no player could be so unready as to waste a second. Watch a game, and you will see it time and again. But the same principle applies to a quarter of a second, which in time is hardly appreciable, but which in distance means two yards. A scrum-half, by hesitating a quarter of a second in passing, deprives his backs of two yards start. Forwards heeling slowly allow the defending backs to cover several yards, and to get into good position. A centre three-quarter, by slowing up before passing, wastes a quarter of a second, and his wing racing alongside of him has to pull up and then get into his stride again, probably taking a full half second, in all three-quarters of a second, or six yards.

These six yards might have let the wing away, but the waste of them brings the defenders six yards nearer, and the wing, instead of being able to ignore them, has to beat them. Give the defence six yards handicap and a clear space quickly becomes uncomfortably full of determined tacklers.

No one would think of giving his opponents a start of six yards, but every second player does it by wasting a fraction of a second, and so presenting his opponents with a gift of the yards.

The importance of not wasting fractions of a second

is also vital to good defence and tackling. To bring a man down, the tackler must be near enough to him to throw his weight into the tackle. He must not only get his arms to the attacker's thighs, but his full weight must reach the attacker also. That is what brings him down, but if the tackler hesitates for a fraction of a second and the man with the ball in that moment is allowed to get two yards further away, the tackler's hands may reach him, but his weight will not. And so the tackle will be ineffective, for it will have no power, and the tackler will be brushed aside.

Or again, a defender is often made to hesitate by the man with the ball pretending to pass. The defender checks himself in his stride, but the attacker races on, and before the defender can recover himself is just out of reach. Take the example of a wing racing down the touch-line, a couple of defenders are coming hard across and should be in time to jam him into touch. Just as they prepare to spring at him the wing gives signs of passing in, the defenders pull up short, and the wing races on through an opening which a moment before was closed. The defenders were thrown off their balance for a tackle, and, before they could possibly recover, the wing was just too far away to tackle. Yet it was all merely a a matter of a fraction of a second.

Examples could be multiplied, but the point to be grasped is that it is not mere pace which tells, but rapidity of movement, or, in other words, not wasting fractions of a second in doing what you get a chance of doing. The greater a man's pace is the better, no matter where he plays, but its value will be thrown away if he does not act quickly. A sprinter is often a hesitant

football player, and the fraction of a second which he requires to make up his mind may neutralise the advantage which his pace would have given him, if he had acted quickly.

It is rapidity of movement which makes the difference between a moderate side and a really efficient side, and combined rapidity of movement is more a matter of football brains than of outstanding pace. Add quickness of action to a knowledge of the game which brings the instinct of being in the right place at the right moment, and the result will be an efficient side which will score freely.

It may seem pedantic to discuss fractions of a second, but a thorough grip of the geography of the field, and of the relation between yards and seconds, will convince you that "when we talk of a team taking advantage of its opportunities we really mean that that team wastes fewer feet than its rival."

CHAPTER VI.

THE BALL

(1) *Keep Your Eye on the Ball*

A RUGBY side is given two things with which to play —a field of play and a Rugby football. The simple geography of the field of play—the lie of the land—has just been dealt with ; now we come to the ball. No one can play Rugby without handling or kicking or dribbling the ball, and a Rugby ball is a very awkward thing to master. To play well, that is to say, really to enjoy playing, the player must master the ball, must study it and wrestle with it until he can make it go where he wants it to go, instead of being at the mercy of the vagaries of a pointed ball and having to do what it chooses to do. Mastering the ball is a real piece of work, and a player will never be happy on the field until he is on intimate and familiar terms with the ball.

Every boy has not the same pace, or quickness of eye or brain as every other boy, but there are certain simple and fundamental things which each can make sure of being able to do, and which can be practised in order to fit oneself to play, and the mastery of the ball is one of these things.

Rugby is a ball game, and the first maxim of all ball games, whether golf, tennis, billiards, ping-pong or polo, is to keep one's eye on the ball. It is the first maxim in playing golf, yet in golf the ball is stationary, and the

maxim is all the more important and necessary where the ball is moving. Watching the ball right on to the racquet is the secret of accurate tennis. No one would hope to hit a fast moving tennis ball accurately if they were looking at the spectators at the moment. Yet in Rugby the principle is frequently ignored. "Keep your eye on the ball" is as essential in the playing of Rugby as in the playing of any other ball game.

Two cases may be taken as examples—receiving a pass and fielding a kick. When receiving a pass, if you don't keep your eye on the ball until it is safely in your hands, you won't catch it ; and until you have it safely in your hands you can't do anything with it. Take the case of a three-quarter about to receive a pass. The pass is given, but as the ball is coming towards him, he lifts his eye off the ball and looks to see where his opponents are. It is only for a fraction of a second, but the ball has been travelling all the same, and when he gets his eye back on to it, it has arrived unexpectedly and is buttered. This is a frequent occurrence. It sometimes afflicts good players. They are unconscious of it, and can't think why they fumbled, when all that was wrong was that they were taking their eye off the ball. The only remedy in this case is to concentrate on the ball, never mind the opposition, make absolutely certain of getting the ball safely and cleanly into your hands. Never attempt to look at the opposition when the ball is in flight.

The same remarks apply to fielding the ball. Take a full back (or any other player) fielding a high kick—the ball is sailing through the air, the opponents are tearing down on him. If he watches the ball all the way he will catch it safely ; *but* if he lifts his eye and looks even for

a moment at the charging opposition he will fumble it. The ball has been travelling and arrives unexpectedly, and he fumbles. Remember that one cannot kick or pass the ball in such circumstances until it is safely in one's hands, and that to field it safely and surely one must never take the eye off the ball.

(2) *Kick with either Foot.*

The next point in regard to mastering the ball is this —that every one who plays Rugby has two feet, and yet not one in twenty can use both. Kicking is a vitally important element in playing Rugby, and every one who plays should be definitely able to kick with either foot. It does not matter where he plays, the advantage of being able to use either foot quickly and accurately is great in every position. This is another fundamental which is common to all players, and one which can be practised apart from actually playing games. Besides, it is quite a fascinating pursuit making the ball travel at any desired angle with whichever foot comes handiest. It would be very sound if every School Committee made it a rule that no one-footed player could get his cap.

To be able to kick accurately with quickness and ease with either foot gives a player an immense advantage ; he can find touch, drop goals, or kick across from positions in which he would be helpless if he could only kick with one foot.

Take a left centre three-quarter who is running towards the left hand touch-line with an opponent bearing down on his side. If he tries to kick to touch and can only kick with his right foot, he can only kick direct into

touch, gaining practically no ground ; or his right foot may swing the ball to the left and send it into touch actually nearer his own goal line than where he kicked from. If, on the other hand, he can kick with his left foot, his way is open to kick at an angle to the touch-line and find touch well up the field.

Similarly, if a right-footed player is close to the right-hand touch line, he can't gain more than a yard or two—unless he is an expert in putting spin on the ball, whereas if he can use his left foot he has only to step towards the open and swing a kick up the touch line and gain twenty yards instead of a couple.

Again, how can a left wing three-quarter, when his way is blocked, kick into the centre without dodging about and wasting time (which means yards to the defence) if he can't use his left foot ?

It is taken for granted that the average boy is right-footed, but the same principles apply to the left-footed boy who can't kick with his right.

Ease of kicking with either foot can be acquired. It is no use sitting down and saying you can't kick with the left foot, or that it feels awkward and silly. That is merely lack of perseverance and keenness. It only needs practice. If you are kicking about a ball at practice, kick it with the left foot ; if you are kicking anything, kick it with your left foot. You can teach yourselves at home. Stuff a bag, or anything that is handy, with rags, remove all breakable objects, and then kick it about. Always aim for some definite object, imagine a touch line and swing your kicks to it from different angles.

Assiduous practice will probably make the left foot more accurate than the right, which has come naturally,

but remember that no one is a complete player, nor will he get the most out of the game, until he can kick easily and with accuracy with either foot.

It does not matter where one plays, whether in the scrum or behind. Some forwards seem to imagine that because they are forwards nothing but shoving is required of them. That is why so many forwards look perfect fools when they suddenly find themselves with the ball in their hands. They don't know what to do with it! If they could even kick with either foot they would not only be of use to their side, but would surely enjoy themselves better. If, then, you are going to play Rugby, for any favour play it with both feet.

(3) *Control the Ball.*

The next fundamental thing to be aimed at is ability to control the ball. A Rugby ball is what one is given to play with and a Rugby ball is an extremely awkward one to control. Instead of being round it is pointed, and instead of running straight it bounces at all angles. Yet, to be able to play the game, the player should be able to control the ball, and control it with his feet. Some will succeed better than others, but the greater the control of the ball a player has, the better player will he be and the more will he get out of the game.

Control of the ball with the feet is the essence and foundation of dribbling, and every Rugby player, whether he be a forward or a back, ought to be able to dribble. Rugby is not always played in fine weather, and often the ground conditions are such that passing by hand is at a discount, and the best, and often the only,

method of progression is by dribbling. Therefore, every member of the side should be a competent dribbler, and dribbling is another of the fundamentals which can be learnt and practised apart from matches.

When one starts dribbling a Rugby ball, what happens? It will not go straight, but insists on bouncing about in different directions, and soon, instead of guiding and directing the ball, the dribbler finds that the ball is leading him, and that he is following it, and is probably having some difficulty in doing even that. That is to say, he has no real control over the ball, and the ball goes where it likes. That, obviously, is no use when there are opponents ready to pick up the ball and make better use of it. How many players would guarantee to dribble a Rugby ball down the field in an approximately straight line at any pace?

You have got to decide the question—Am I going to master the ball, or am I always going to be at its mercy?

Mastering a Rugby ball is not an easy matter, but it can be done, and the doing of it adds zest to the enjoyment of the game. So, set out to have a real struggle with the ball, a struggle which never ceases, for no matter how good a dribbler one becomes, one has to keep one's hand in by taking out a ball at practice and pitting oneself against its antics.

Continual dribbling practice and a determination to beat the ball no matter how it bounces, is the only way, but don't expect the knack to come at once or by luck.

In beginning to practise dribbling, don't strive after pace. Start as slowly as you like, but make the ball go where you intend it to go. Keep at it until you can control your dribble, no matter how slowly.

Control of the ball, not pace, is the important point. Dribbling in a game is seldom rapid, but is most effective when combined, and combined dribbling depends entirely on control of the ball and the ability to pass it from one to another at the right moment. The ball must be kept close to the dribbler, otherwise an opponent will have the chance to pick it up or kick it away. Control means that the dribbler has the ball only so far ahead of him at any time that he can reach it again before anyone else. Dribbling, therefore, is a steady working of the ball down the field; and steady control is the first essential, not pace. If the field is open, kicking the ball ahead between opponents and racing after it takes the place of dribbling. That is a much more rapid movement, but it throws away the control of the ball.

Dribbling is not kicking the ball ahead, but moving it forward with the inside of the foot, and, in changing direction, with the outside of the foot. As the pace increases, the ball will tend to rise, and then it is controlled with the inside of the legs, and either smothered when it drops to the ground and brought under the control of the feet again, or else allowed to rise until it can be seized in the hands and carried.

The advice to dribble slowly cannot be too much emphasised. Plod up and down the field making the ball do what you want it to do, and never mind about pace; but do mind about control—being able to guide the ball, to push it past an opponent either to right or left, to trick an opponent by pretending to go one way and sending the ball the other, to pass the ball in any direction to others who are backing up, to carry on a combined dribble, to trap the ball and to smother it

when necessary. In almost every game of Rugby one sees players baffled by the ball and losing opportunities, all because the ball beats them and they don't know how to control it. Usually the fault is excitement and haste, and there is nothing like the steady, deliberate controlling of the ball to develop steadiness and coolness in oneself.

In Rugby, then, you are given a very awkward ball to play with. Very well, play with it, kick it, chase it, dribble it, play tricks with it until you are its master and know its every whim. To be a good Rugby player and so get the greatest pleasure out of your play, you must be on intimate terms with the ball.

Similar remarks apply to the control of the ball by hand, that is to say, passing. Practise passing and throwing the ball about until you can be confident that it will go where you mean it to go. Always, unless it is absolutely impossible, use both hands to receive or give a pass. A long pass or throw is, of course, made with one hand, while many a pass can only be reached by stretching out one hand instead of both, but in the ordinary course of events always use both. It is foolish, not clever, to take the ball with one hand when it is possible to take it with both.

It is not possible to lay down only one way of passing. Different players will pass the ball successfully and accurately by varying methods. Pace and strength are obtained by the swing of the body or the turn of the shoulders working in conjunction with the arms. The pass should be aimed in front of the man who is to receive it, so that he can take it in his stride and not have to slow up, and it should be aimed to meet his lower chest. Passing should be as fast as possible. The slower the

pass the more time the defenders have to reach the man who is to receive the pass. Consequently, the pass should not be lobbed or heaved up into the air. It should be a definite movement of the body with the arms attached with sufficient force to make the ball fly straight to its objective—slightly in front of the receiver and about his middle.

In order that the pass reach its mark the passer must be sure that he knows definitely where he is passing to ; he must see exactly where the receiver of the pass is before he directs the ball. Just before passing, his eye will be on his opponents, judging the moment when to pass, but as he swings his body towards the receiver he must turn his head also and see exactly where he is passing to. It is essential that the receiver should receive the ball cleanly without fumbling or breaking his stride, and the passer, as he passes, must look at the man he is going to pass to. Firstly, always be sure that there is a man to pass to, and, secondly, have your eye on him when passing to him.

The dummy pass should also be assiduously practised, and practised by every member of the side. Giving a dummy is simply pretending to pass but not passing, but going on yourself instead. The body is swung and the arms shoot out as for a pass, but at the last moment the ball is whipped back again and the man with the ball, who, as a rule, will be facing sideways, breaks the angle of his running and goes straight on. Giving a dummy has the great advantage of bringing the man with the ball into the straight again. As we have seen, when discussing running straight, two opponents usually meet at an angle moving obliquely towards the touch line.

If the man with the ball passes without breaking that angle his opponent is free to run on towards the receiver of the pass. If, however, the man with the ball, by pretending to pass, persuades his opponent not to tackle him but to anticipate the pass and over-run him, and then he suddenly draws back the ball, and goes straight, he outwits his opponent and at the same time moves straight down the field instead of across it. Suppose, as in previous illustrations, the man with the ball is running to the right ; the motion of passing to someone on his right carries his body to the right, but the ball is suddenly and abruptly drawn back with a force which throws his balance to the left of his previous inclination to the right—that is to say, it brings him approximately straight and facing his opponents' goal line. The practice of the dummy is extremely useful for this reason, and should not be neglected by any member of a team. The defence, for instance, is apt to look upon a forward running with the ball as a guileless person to be easily bluffed into passing without drawing his man ; and, conversely, a forward who can give a good dummy will upset many a defence and thereby add greatly to his own enjoyment and the opportunities of his side. When playing about with a ball, amuse yourselves practising dummies.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BALL—contd.

Kicking

THE system of scoring in Rugby is based on goal-kicking. In the earlier development of the game only goals counted; a run-in (or try) only entitled the successful side to a try-at-goal; and to-day every method of scoring involves goal kicking. The methods of scoring are (1) a try, which counts three points whether a goal is kicked or not, but which is followed by a kick at goal which, if successful, adds other two points, or five in all; (2) a dropped goal, which counts four points; (3) a penalty goal, which counts three points; and (4) a gaol from a mark, which also counts three points. The two latter kinds of goal —the penalty and from the mark—may be either placed or dropped. In each method of scoring, however, goal kicking is involved, and therefore the art of kicking a Rugby ball is obviously one of the first things to learn in the game, and one of the last to give up practising. There are three methods of kicking defined in the Rules, viz., the place kick, the drop kick, and the punt. Goals can be kicked only by the first two methods.

The principles of all ball games are the same, whether the ball is struck with the foot, the golf club, or the tennis racquet. The striking implement in each case is drawn back in order to bring into play the balance of the body,

and a correct stroke depends on the return swing bringing the striking implement into contact with the ball at the exact moment when the momentum of the striking implement and of the body are both at their maximum force. That, roughly, is the mystery of timing. In Rugby the striking implement is the foot, which in turn is attached to a leg. As the foot is drawn back the balance of the body moves forward, and when the foot is swung forward the body is forced back, adding leverage power to the foot and leg. The driving force of the kick depends on whether or not the swing of the foot receives the additional leverage of the body movement at exactly the right moment, *i.e.*, the moment of striking the ball. Further, the foot must be capable of bearing the weight of the ball, and therefore, just as the shaft attached to the head of a golf club must have some stiffness, so the leg attached to the foot must be stiffened when meeting the ball, and it is the straightening of the knee action at the moment of impact which adds yards to a kick, just as the bringing in of the wrists at the right moment adds yards to the golf stroke. In kicking, as in other strokes, the follow-through is essential.

Apply these principles to the place kick, the more important method of kicking goals. "A place-kick is made by kicking the ball after it has been placed on the ground for the purpose." For the place kick, the ball must be placed on the ground, and the success of a place kick depends largely on *how* the ball is placed on the ground. The ball must be steady, and aimed in the right direction. That in the case of a place-kick following upon a try is the duty of the placer, for in this particular instance the kicker is not allowed to place the ball himself.

Hence the placer must know exactly how the kicker wants it placed, and a great many more goals would be kicked if the kicker practised goal kicking with the placer. It is easy to kick goals in practice, placing the ball oneself, and kicking without anything to distract attention. What is wanted is practice under match conditions with the placer, and with others practising charging. Both the proximity of the placer and the chargers are apt to make the kicker take his eye or his mind off the ball.

Each place kicker has ideas of his own as to how he prefers the ball to be placed, but in general it will be found that for short kicks, when the ball requires to rise high at once to avoid charging opponents, the ball should be placed practically upright ; while for longer kicks it should be placed sloping forward from the kicker. There is no rule, so long as it is placed on the ground. The ball may be placed flat and parallel to the goal line if preferred —and some kickers have preferred that method for short kicks. But in all cases the first essential is that there must be a proper place to place the ball in. It must be carefully prepared, by heel or toe or hand, so that the ball when placed will not wobble or fall to one side, but will face the intended line of the kick. The placing of the ball is the foundation of good goal kicking. Then the eye must be fixed, not merely on the ball, but on that part of it which is to be kicked. No movement of the placer or charging of opponents must cause the eye or the brain of the kicker to flicker. Taking as many steps forward as suits him to enable him to bring the balance of his body into play, he swings his foot and, straightening his knee at the moment of impact, obtains the necessary force to propel the ball. If he has got too near to the

ball before kicking, his body will still be forward and he will take turf ; if he is too far away he will not get his full force into his kick.

The follow-through must be straight. There is often a tendency to draw the foot across the ball, sending it off with a slight curve. In other words, the swing of the leg and the follow-through describe a curve instead of being directly in line with the intended flight of the ball.

The second method by which goals can be kicked is the drop kick. " A drop kick is made by letting the ball fall from the hands and kicking it as it rises." In the place kick the ball is stationary on the ground; in the drop kick it is moving. Instead of placing it on the ground, the player has to drop it from his hands and kick it as it touches the ground. In the one case the ball is stationary, in the other it is moving, but the same principles apply to both kicks. Power and accuracy of direction depend on the timing of the kick. Each player will have to work out for himself how far in front of him the ball should be dropped in order to get the full force of his kick. Properly timed, the drop-kick will travel far, and a good kicker can score goals from the centre line. The drop kick is mainly used to drop out from the twenty-five, to drop at goal in the course of play, and as an alternative to the place kick in trying to kick goals from penalties or marks. Opportunities for drop kicking will certainly occur, and the important point is that everyone should be equipped to seize his opportunities, and the dropping of goals at any moment or from any angle is a useful and refreshing pastime when knocking about with a ball.

The ability to seize opportunities will, of course, be

greatly increased if the drop kick can be brought off with equal facility and accuracy with either foot. The dropped goal is a distinct feature of Rugby, and the art of drop-kicking should be assiduously cultivated. One never knows when an opportunity to score may occur. The drop at goal in the course of play will be dealt with later. In the meantime, the value of practising drop-kicking is emphasised.

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The simplest and most frequent method of kicking a Rugby ball is the punt, and in this every member of a team should be expert. "A punt is made by letting the ball fall from the hands and kicking it before it touches the ground." Here again the result depends on the swing of the body and the foot being so timed that the ball is kicked at the moment of maximum force; and further, in punting, the ball has to be kicked with a particular part of the foot. Let anyone take a heavy, wet Rugby ball and punt it with his toes, and the resultant jar will satisfy him that the toe is not the proper part to punt with. It will be found that the flat of the instep produced by pointing the toes is the place.

Each player must work out how far in front of him the ball must be dropped to obtain the best results. Until he does so his timing will be bad and his kicking erratic. What is most wanted in punting is accuracy and length. Both can be increased by practice, especially accuracy. Everyone when he has a ball to kick about can fit himself to be a player in this respect by deliberately aiming to land the ball at a certain spot every time he kicks. Keep the eye on the ball till after it has been kicked—and not

on where it is bound for—and practise till the ball can be landed in touch every time just at the end of its flight.

Punting is the easiest method of kicking, but even punting can provide a perpetual struggle for mastery over the ball, for having acquired accuracy and length, the kicker may go on to try to make the ball swerve according to his will. This is done by imparting spin to the ball, just as in billiards, or deliberately pulling or slicing in golf, but it is not for beginners. However, if anyone imagines that punting is a completely simple thing he can apply his brains to the spin of a Rugby ball.

Ability to punt accurately and with either foot is essential to every member of a side.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SCRUM

(a) The Scrummage

HAVING grasped the importance of the direction of one's movement on the field of play; having realised that time is translated in terms of feet and yards, and that on the field time is distance; having acquired the habit of keeping the eye on the ball; having wrestled with it until it is is under one's control; and being able to kick with either foot, one has a groundwork of fundamentals on which to build from experience in actual play.

What happens in actual play? The ball is kicked off from centre, returned to touch, a scrum is formed, back division attack, more scrums and so on. One of the first things and one of the most frequent things in a game is a scrummage. A scrummage is the appointed method of bringing the ball into play again after it has been dead, following upon an infringement which has not been serious enough to warrant a penalty kick, or after it has been "held," and is at the root of the whole scheme of tactics in play, for although the backs may be the principal scoring agency, their opportunities of scoring will depend largely on whether or not their forwards are superior in the scrum. A scrum is formed by the forwards on each side forming into two compact

masses and engaging one another, and the ball is thrown in between them. The ball having become dead and a scrum having been ordered, each side is given an equal chance of re-opening the attack. The object of each set of forwards is to get possession of the ball, for the initiative of the next move depends entirely on being in possession of the ball. Control of the scrum is, therefore, an enormously important point. Other things being equal, control of the scrum depends on packing and the use of the brains. It is not merely a question of dull shoving ; shoving with brains will beat mere shoving, and bright intelligence can often frustrate the side which gets the ball from making use of it.

The first object of a pack of forwards in the scrum, whether in attack or defence, is to get possession of the ball. Not more than three forwards can take their places in the front row, and the usual formation is 3-2-3, three forwards in the front row, two in the second, and three in the back row, presuming that the side is playing eight forwards ; and the first point to insist upon is tight packing. If the eight are packed tightly, the scrum will be a solid mass of resistance, and its shoving power will be concentrated both in direction and power. The scrum is too often merely eight forwards, each shoving hard enough perhaps but each shoving on his own and shoving anywhere ; whereas it should be a unity exerting united force. The centre man in the front row is the important man in that row. First up to the place of the scrum, he will get into position with his arms thrown out to receive the outside men who come up on either side of him. Then, gripping one another, they must lock as

tightly as possible and be prepared to resist considerable pressure. The heads of the two second row men have got to get between the centre and the outside men, and so the front row will be more tightly locked in front than behind, which helps to make the outside men push inwards towards the line of the centre man who pushes straight. The inward push of the two outside men is not marked, but if the locking is tight it helps to concentrate the direction of the push of the whole scrum along the desired line, viz. :—the centre of the opposing scrum.

The two second row men pack low in between the men in front and on either side of the centre man. Their job is to shove and firmly to refuse to be shoved. If they give way the whole scrum gives way, for the back row being, as will be explained, much more loosely packed, has no chance of holding the scrum if those in front of it give way. The two second row men should, therefore, be the most powerful scrummagers in the side, sure on their feet, heavy if possible, but most important of all, men of grit absolutely determined to hold their ground at all costs. They, realising that Man has been given by Providence two cushions not merely to sit upon but for the assistance of fellow scrummagers, get their shoulders well home below the nearest cushion of the centre and the outside man in the front row on their respective sides ; and packing tightly shove for all they are worth. They push straight ahead, and if their shoulders are well home and they are shoving low, they should not be pressed upwards under the stress of shoving. The second row must pack tightly. On them more than on anyone else depends the rigidity of the

scrum, and its resistance to the shoving power of the opposition. On it also depends to a large extent the success of the centre man in the front row in getting possession of the ball. He cannot do much shoving, as he has to lift at least one foot to hook the ball, and he must be supported by the two outside men of the front row and the strong shoving support of the second row.

The third row men have to be ready to combine with scrumming a certain amount of skirmishing work on the break-up of the scrum. Accordingly, they should be fast forwards with brains. They all have, of course, to shove equally with the others, but their packing differs, for the two outside men have only one shoulder to push with. If the two outside men try to shove straight, they tend to force the second row men outwards, so they do not link tightly with the centre man but push inwards towards the centre of the scrum. This position, besides adding the maximum of force to the combined push through the centre of the scrum, also enables the wing forwards to protect their scrum half to a certain extent by making it more difficult for the opposing scrum half to get round the scrum. The centre man in the back row packs between the two second row men and pushes straight. All pack low and, getting their shoulders well home in the appropriate place, shove for all they are worth to support the second row and, therefore, the whole scrum. The centre position of the back row should be filled by a forward of intelligence, for it will fall to him to control the ball according as it is to be heeled, or kept, or wheeled.

A scrum having been formed the ball is put in fairly between the opposing front rows and the struggle for possession commences. It is usually short and sharp,

for the side which gets the first shove usually gets the ball at once. The getting of the first shove depends on whether or not the forwards are packed in such a way that the whole force of their shoving power is brought into action at once. The aim of the front row is to pack low—lower than their opponents, and to be in such a position that they can shove. Merely bending the body more or less at right angles to the legs, or standing more or less upright and bending the head will not give shoving power, and that fact must be continually emphasised. The front row will get as low as possible, rather in the attitude of a sprinter ready to push off, that is, with the body forward and knees bent. As the ball comes in they push off like sprinters, that is, they straighten their knees and try to rush forward. Interlocked as they are with the opposing scrum they cannot actually rush forward, but, forcing themselves under the opposing forwards, they push them upwards and backwards so that their opponents require all their power to prevent themselves being pushed backwards and, consequently, have no power left to hook the ball The importance of packing lower than the opponents and being in a position to heave forward and upward is vital. If the first shove is got, and with it the ball, it is easy to push the ball back as you hove, but heeling is impossible if you are being lifted off your feet and require every ounce of energy in straining to prevent yourselves being pushed backward.

The first shove is what gets the ball, and even an overweighted pack can get the first shove if it can beat its opponents at packing tight, shoving low, and in concerted effort. There is a great deal of pleasure and

satisfaction to be got out of beating a heavier pack by skill and tactics.

Further, the forwards must shove together, so that the whole eight work as a unit not separately. Each forward may shove enthusiastically, but if each is shoving without relating his shove to that of the others, there is no combined power. A tug of war team, each member of which tugged as it suited him without regard to when his neighbour was pulling, would only produce a series of ineffective jerks. Similarly in the Boat Race, a crew, each member of which rowed out of time with the others, would be a farce, no matter how hard or enthusiastically each was rowing. But, bring these individual efforts under control and make them a unity by teaching each individual to time his effort so that the team or crew gets the combined force of all—then you have Power. And it is the same with a Rugby scrum: control and combined effort will produce Power, and a result which no amount of sporadic shoving, no matter how hard, can ever produce.

(*b*) *Scrum Tactics.*

In these days when so much importance is placed upon scoring backs, it cannot be too strongly emphasised that the work of the pack is still the most important and essential foundation for the successful work of the whole team, and that the pack itself is a most powerful weapon both in attack and defence. To imagine that the only purpose of the pack is to heel the ball out to the backs is a fallacy. Heeling to the backs when they want the ball is only one of their functions, and to

neglect the other functions is to remove half the interest of playing forward and to neglect the power of more than half the side. The forwards in the tight may be asked to heel the ball, or to wheel the scrum, or to shove straight ahead.

No matter what the order is, the first thing to make sure of is to get possession of the ball, that is, to hook it. Hooking is the job of the centre man in the front row. So long as the present rules remain unaltered, the outside man on the side from which the ball is being put in must let the ball pass him. As soon as it is past the outside man the centre man tries to hook it back to his second row, from whence it goes to the middle of the back row to be heeled to the scrum half if heeling is called for. The heeling to be effective must be clean, that is to say, the ball should come straight back from the front row to the centre of the back row and left clear for the scrum half. Time is essential. A slow heel and the ball hanging in the back row before the scrum half can get hold of it throws away the advantage of having got possession of the ball, because the delay allows the opposing scrum half to get round on top of his opponent, the opposing wing forwards to get into position, and the whole opposing three-quarter line to get forward into defensive formation ready to smother the attacking line when it does get the ball. To get a real attacking advantage the backs must get the ball at once, and the delay of a second in heeling throws away that attacking advantage. Fast, clean heeling must be aimed at, and it takes combined work on the part of the forwards to achieve it.

One main point to remember is that each forward

must continue to shove until the ball is away. The shove must be maintained while the ball is being heeled. No one can heel if he requires both his feet to be firmly planted on the ground in order to maintain his position. Consequently, after hooking the ball the pack must continue shoving their opponents until the heeling is completed and the ball is out. Heeling is not mere drudgery. Forwards can always bend their energies and exercise their wits to achieve faster and cleaner heeling.

Secondly, the forwards may be asked to wheel the scrum. Wheeling is one of the moves in the game whose importance and use is being realised again after a period of neglect. What, then, is the use of a wheel and when is it useful? It is for one thing a method of forward attack by which not only is ground gained but opportunities are given to the backs. Suppose a side "A" has the superior forwards, but the opposition " B " has the upper hand behind the scrum to such an extent that "A's " passing movements are checkmated, and the attacks of their back division rendered ineffective. "A's " forwards are getting possession of the ball in the scrum, but heeling it to the backs produces no results. How can "A's " captain utilise his winning asset, viz., his forwards, to break up " B's " defence and win the game? That is the problem, and the solution lies in using "A's " forward superiority to wheel the scrum and to break away with a dribbling rush. The scheme works out—or is intended to work out—as follows :—A scrum is ordered, " A's " forwards get possession of the ball in the scrum, but instead of heeling they wheel the scrum and the back rows break away with the ball at their feet. The opposing scrum half is brushed aside, also the stand-

off half, and both of " B " centres are immediately drawn out of position to throw themselves at the feet of the dribbling forwards. They stop, or half stop, the rush. Then is "A's " opportunity. The rushing forwards, temporarily checked, form round at once and push on but leave the ball—walk over it, and leave it for the scrum half, who immediately whips it out to his three-quarters, who are complete and in attacking position. The opposition defence, instead of being an unbreakable line, is now reduced to two wings and the full back. Every one else is out of position, and it is only by desperate and exhausting efforts that they can get across to tackle "A's " threequarters. If the forwards can get the ball out at once on being checked this is a very telling move, and one which, repeated consistently, will break the hearts of any defence and give the backs opportunities to score. Every wheel will not necessarily be successful—the wheeling forwards may lose the ball, the opposing forwards may cut round and head off the wheel, or the halves may nip it in the bud ; but few back divisions will stand a consistent treatment of wheeling and rushing by good forwards. There is nothing more demoralising to backs.

The wheel is also extremely useful in defence or tight corners. For instance, a side is defending desperately within its own " 25." Its forwards get the ball in the scrum, but passing is too risky to justify heeling to the backs, how is the superiority of the forwards in getting the ball in the scrum to be utilised ? Again, the answer is by wheeling. This time—for the purpose is, first and foremost, to gain ground—the scrum will be wheeled on the side nearer the touch line, and the ball dribbled

closely, five, ten, fifteen yards down the field before it is pushed into touch. Then, perhaps, the process may be repeated, until the danger is averted, and play returns to neutral ground. When a side is hemmed in on its own line, wheeling the scrum is extremely useful and every yard gained is a relief. It is, undoubtedly, hard work, but yard after yard can be won by wheeling scrum after scrum until the attack is held, broken and driven back. Wheeling is a most useful and effective method of clearing one's lines.

How, then, is a wheel accomplished? The idea is to slew the scrum round so that the back row men can get clear of it at once. If the back row men tried to break away with the ball while the scrum was still straight in front of them, they would, obviously, have to work their way round the scrum before they got clear of it, whereas by pushing the scrum aside, they can get clear of it at once and break away.

The method by which it is done introduces controversy, for some hold that the ball should be heeled to the second row man on the side on which the break-away is desired, that is, either right or left; while others hold that the ball should be heeled to the back-row who, on the wheel being executed, break away and are supported by the second row men. The preliminary movements are the same, however, in both cases. Firstly, the forwards must get possession of the ball; secondly, they must know that a wheel is called for and to which side they are to wheel; and thirdly, if the wheel is to be to, say, the left, as soon as the ball is safely heeled by the front row, the left hand man in that row must shove to the right for all he is worth, in order to slew the scrum round. The right

hand man in the front row eases off so as to let the scrum wheel round, and the others keep shoving to prevent themselves being pushed off the ball, but shoving the scrum rightward. As the scrum wheels round, the man with the ball breaks away. At this point, however, the two alternative methods must be taken separately.

If the ball has been heeled to the left hand man in the second row, he breaks away with the ball at his feet, accompanied by the two back row men immediately behind him. The left hand man in the back row should get outside the man with the ball at once so that the ball may be slipped to him if the half challenges the dribbler. The right hand man in the back row and others follow them as soon as practicable.

If the second method is adopted, the ball comes back to the centre man in the back row, and when the wheel is far enough round to let them go ahead, he and the left hand man get their heads up and break loose, followed by the right hand man of the back row, and the left hand man in the second row, and so on.

Whichever method is employed, it should be borne in mind that the opposing half—or forward, as the case may be—when trying to head off the wheel, will go for the man with the ball at his feet. The player who breaks away should, therefore, slip it at once to the man outside him who, in the case taken above, is coming up on his left, and is unmarked, and then the others back him up in a combined dribble. A break-away by one player is no use, and many a wheel dies at birth simply because the man who breaks away does not at once pass the ball out, or because his colleagues do not get away quickly enough from the scrum to receive his pass.

The wheel, then, is a combined move, in which every man has his particular duty and must execute it in combination with seven others. All must keep their eyes open in the scrum, and their brains working, in order to realise the exact moment when to shove, and in what direction to shove, when to give way, or when to get their heads up and break away, as the circumstances require. Forwards who imagine that their whole duty is heeling have, obviously, not sufficient knowledge of the game to bring off a wheel. That requires intelligence.

The wheel is a definite move in scrum tactics and, conversely, countering a wheel is also a definite move. When a pack realises that the other pack is wheeling the scrum, they must at once adopt methods to counter it, and to prevent the opposition forwards breaking away with the ball at their feet.

The scrum has, say, been wheeled to the left, the side on which the forwards will break away. The wheeling forwards have pushed the opposing scrum to the right so as to get it out of the way of their own forwards who are to break away. The left side rear fowards of the opposition pack are no longer of any real use in that position. The right hand man in the front row of the wheel is quite content to be shoved a little, for the wheel is pivoting on him, and the harder the left side of the opposing scrum shove, the more help they may give to the wheel. On the other hand, the wheeling forwards are preparing to get their heads up and break away from the left side of their scrum. Consequently, the rear forwards on the left side of the defeated pack should break away at once, rush round the back of the scrum and hurl themselves in on the right side of their pack so as to engage the

opposition forwards who are about to break away. If these forwards can get round to the danger spot on the other side of the scrum before the wheeling forwards break away, they will defeat the wheel. To do so, they must be intelligent enough to realise when a wheel is being worked by the opposition and to break away quickly and get round at once to engage the forwards who are about to break away.

Lastly, the forwards may be asked to shove the other side back and take the ball through with them. There are occasions when this can be done and the opposing pack steadily pushed backwards, before the ball is heeled or wheeled. The moment has to be well-chosen and the pack must have the necessary power to do it, but when it comes off, it is a heartening performance.

Scrumming without a knowledge of scrum tactics develops into a disorganised muddle. Some forwards treat the scrum as a free and easy rough and tumble, cheerfully oblivious to its formation and uses, and completely ignorant of the most elementary conception of their duties, with the result that they are nothing but a surging mass of futile and purposeless beings. Such find the work of a forward dull. Scrum tactics, however, require intelligence, and what demands intelligence to accomplish fills one with satisfaction when accomplished. That is part of the joy of a forward. In all his scrumming his brain has to be working as well. He has the job of outwitting his opposing scrummagers and beating them at their own game. Knowledge of scrum work, and ability to carry it out, make all the difference between that futile forward play which is useless to the side

and exhausting to the players, and good forward play, which is not only a real asset to the side, but a continual exhilaration to the player.

(*c*) *General.*

As Rugby has developed, the back division is, and must be, the main scoring division, and the forward division can never take its place in that respect, but it takes both divisions to make a team, and the work of the pack still remains the essential foundation of the success of the side. There has been a period when the importance of the back division has been rather over-emphasised, and the place of forward play has, in consequence, been minimised and neglected, but a side must be equipped with knowledge of the game, both fore and aft. The scrum comprises more than half the side, and it is surely folly to leave undeveloped the full resources of that large fraction. If the scrum is to be really effective, and forward play is to be really enjoyed, each forward must know his separate function in the scrum, and keenly apply his wits to the working out of that function—the purpose of the front row, the importance of the second, how the third row act, and the angle at which each must shove in order to contribute the greatest force to the whole mass. The vital importance of packing low, packing tight, and getting the first shove will become obvious if the machinery of the scrum is understood. Once players appreciate the reason why things are done, they will be quick to practise them, and the right idea will remain with them all their days, but only when the right idea is got, and not till then, will the combined movements of the scrum

be possible. For the successful negotiation of combined movements in close scrummaging can only be achieved by every member of the pack knowing what to do, and doing it at the right moment. There are eight others trying to defeat the move whatever it may be, and the intense interest of close scrum work lies in bringing off a move, complicated in itself, in face of the toil and sweat of the opposing eight. Intelligent scrum work will make forward play interesting, and while the game is only a game, and must be enjoyed as such, it adds nothing to the game or to the enjoyment thereof to play it badly, or rather, not to try to play it well, while its value in the development of personality disappears if no mental effort is exercised or involved.

CHAPTER IX.

BACKS IN ATTACK

THE scrum and the art of scrumming are the foundation of team play. The object of scrumming is to get possession of the ball, and the object of getting possession of the ball is to enable the side which gets it to attack, that is to say, to get nearer to the opponents' line and, if possible, to score. The development of the game has been traced to show how the back division has become the main scoring division of the side, and back division attack is carried out mainly by running with the ball and passing it by hand from one to another. In discussing the geography of the field of play, it was shown that the first essential of combined running and passing was to run in such a way that the direction of the whole movement would be kept straight, that is, in the direction of the opponents' goal line, and not in the direction of the touch lines. That is called, for shortness, running straight.

The other fundamental principle of combined running and passing is making openings for one's colleagues, that is to say, running in such a way and passing at such a moment that the receiver will be in a better position than the giver of the pass to make progress towards the opponents' goal line. This point should be drilled into all players. Passing in itself is not a virtue, but passing at the right moment to the right man is. To decline to

pass is often far sounder than to pass. Much quite futile passing is indulged in, simply because the man with the ball does not know what to do and hands it on to his neighbour in the hope that he will be better placed, or, perhaps, in the hope that the receiver of the pass and not himself will receive the blame for the breakdown of the movement. The job of the man with the ball is to manœuvre so that, when he passes, the receiver of the pass will have a better chance to make progress than he had, and he has no business passing until he has done so.

The third general principle to be borne in mind by the back division is that combined rapidity of movement is more important than individual pace. Valuable as individual pace is, every one does not possess it, and even those who do possess it must be given opportunities to turn it to profit whereas combined rapidity of movement can be practised, and will not merely make the opportunities, but will make up for any lack of individual pace in taking advantage of them. It involves each player knowing where to be, knowing what to do and doing it at once.

These three general principles must be borne in mind in any discussion of back play.

The forwards having got possession of the ball, and having been instructed to heel it out, what happens then? The ball is heeled out to the scrum half, who whips it out to the stand-off half, who runs with it and passes it to his three-quarters, who, in turn, run with it or pass it on. The main function of the backs in attack is to gain ground by running with and passing the ball. There is no object in running or passing except the gaining of ground. Passing for passing's sake is a waste of time,

and usually involves a loss of ground, for the ball is always being passed backwards, and, therefore, if no advance is made before the ball is held up, the spot where the passing movement breaks down will be further away from the opponents' goal line than the point from which the move started. If it is obvious that ground will not be gained by passing, some other method of making progress must be tried ; but in the first place the straight forward passing movement must be dealt with.

While always remembering that Rugby is played with fifteen men a-side, and that it is the job of each one of these fifteen to lend a hand in every movement, there are six players on whom the duty of making ground by running and passing specially falls, namely, two halves and four three-quarters.

Of these, the scrum half has the special function of getting the ball away from the scrum, and what he has to aim at is rapidity and accuracy. The difference between scrum halves lies, firstly, in the rapidity with which one gets the ball away as compared with another. The importance of not losing time in getting the ball away has already been touched upon, but it must again be emphasised. Delay in getting away the ball from the scrum throws away an attacking advantage. Both sides may be expecting their forwards to get the ball, both are therefore in attacking formation. As soon as one side sees that the other forwards have got the ball and are heeling it, their three-quarters will come forward in order to get as close up to the attacking three-quarter line as they can, and so prevent them gaining ground unchallenged, and also to minimise their chances of breaking

through by giving them less room to work in. Consequently, if the scrum half delays in getting the ball away, the opposition backs are given time to get further forward and into better defensive position than they could otherwise have done. It is now more difficult for the attackers to attack, and more easy for the defenders to smother the attack. A moment before, there was opportunity; now, the way is barred by defenders. That is what a scrum half can do by hesitating or delaying. Conversely, the faster a scrum half can get the ball away, the more chances will his backs have for attack. Attack depends largely on having the initiative. A quick service by the scrum half gives his backs the initiative, a slow service hands it over to the defence.

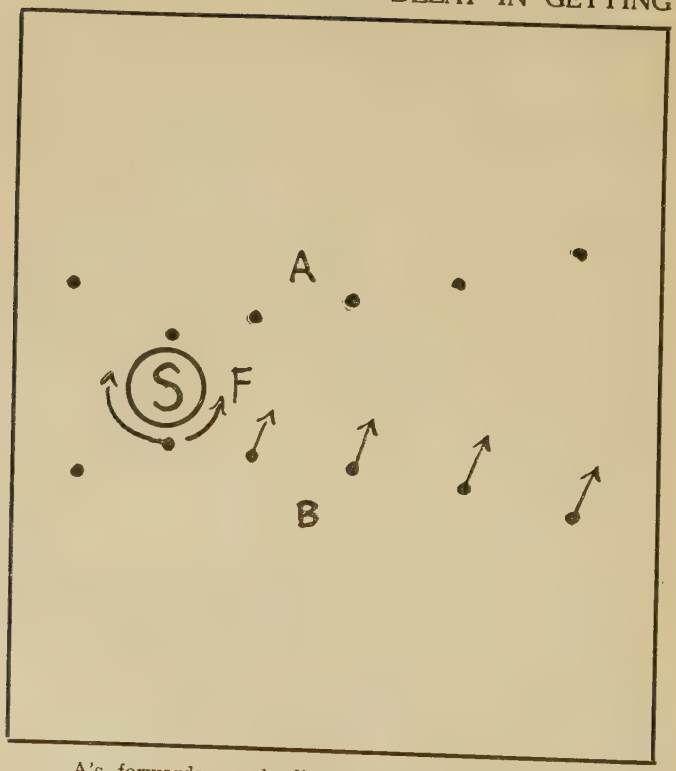
A study of the diagrams on the two following pages will indicate the position.

. . . . . .

The other essential in a scrum half is accuracy of passing, certainty that his pass will go direct to his stand-off half, or whoever he is passing to. That demands an accuracy of passing gained by much practice, but it also demands an intimate understanding between the scrum and stand-off halves. The scrum half must know where the stand-off will be and how he likes his passes. The passes should be directed so far in front of the stand-off half that he can take them in his stride. The stand-off half should be moving fast when he receives the ball.

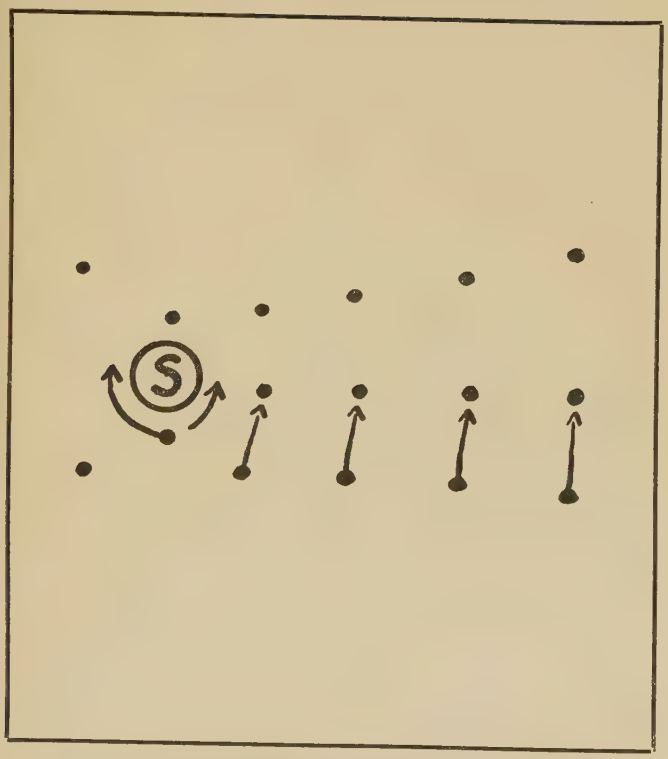
Further, the scrum half must know every time where the stand-off half is going to be and in what direction he proposes to go. It is for the halves to cultivate the element of surprise, and every now and then to do the

DELAY IN GETTING



A's forwards are heeling the ball. B's backs have seen this, and have just started to get forward to meet A's backs. If the ball comes out quickly A's backs will get the ball in the position shown, and will have plenty of room before B's backs can reach them.

OUT THE BALL



If the ball is heeled slowly or the scrum half is slow in getting the ball away, B's backs will have had time to get as far forward as possible, and as soon as the ball is out will get down on A's backs, who have now little chance. The diagram is stationary, but in play the players are moving rapidly, and towards one another, so that by the time A's centres have advanced and B's centres have advanced, A's centres will have no room to evade B's centres owing to the latter having been allowed to get several yards forward through the delay in getting out the ball.

unexpected. If an unexpected move is to be brought off successfully, the scrum half's pass must find its billet at once. If it goes astray, or is fumbled, the surprise is over and the defence has time to checkmate the move. Rapidity and accuracy on the part of the scrum half lie at the root of successful back division attack.

Of the other five attackers, the two wings are the striking weapons, and the stand-off half and the two centres are the men who make the openings for them. It is no longer merely a case of passing the ball out to fast wings and letting them use their pace. There are now too many players in proportion to the breadth of the field to ensure the success of that. It is in the centre that the work of clearing the way must be done, and it is the particular function of the stand-off half and the two centres to try to pierce the defence in the centre, and to do so in such a way that the movement of the attack will be straight down the centre of the field parallel to the touch lines. To achieve this they must study the theory and practice of running straight.

A frequent cause of running across, as distinct from running straight, is that one of the centres stands too near the stand-off half and does not give him room to manœuvre. The stand-off half has to lie fairly deep behind the scrum, partly to make it more certain that the pass will not be interfered with, and partly because he may decide to go either to one side of the scrum or the other, and he likes to keep the other side guessing. Lying rather deep, then, the stand-off half, on receiving the ball, is bound to start running obliquely in order to get into the open and clear of the scrum. If the centre next to him is too near to him, he will have to move

across the field to give the stand-off half room, and his direction will be upset. If the centre gives the stand-off plenty of room, the latter can get into the open, and get straight again before passing, and the centre can come up straight to receive the pass. The fault of the centre nearest the scrum being too near the stand-off half is a frequent cause of the whole line being sent off in an oblique direction across the field instead of straight.

The particular job of the stand-off half is to improve the chances of his colleagues by giving them some advantage in tactical position before passing. The clearest example is when the attacking stand-off half succeeds in drawing both the opposing stand-off half and one of the centres on to himself, thus drawing the opposing centre out of position and leaving a gap in the defence. The problem for the attacking stand-off half in this case is how to persuade both his *vis-a-vis* and a centre that it is necessary for them both to tackle him. He may run directly at the centre, or dodge so as to appear to be about to pass between them, or make some other manoeuvre, but it is his wits against theirs, and the object aimed at is to draw the defence away from his own colleague to whom he intends to pass. A stand-off half cannot, of course, always bring this off ; sometimes he may be so closely watched that his only chance is to kick to touch or pass direct to his centre ; but the stand-off half is the pivot of the whole line, and its opportunities and the direction of its movement depends primarily on his initial movements. It is very necessary, therefore, that the stand-off half should get straight before passing. No matter what else he is unable to accomplish, he must try to do this. On this depends (1) the direction in which the

backs will be sent off, (2) the amount of space in which they can manœuvre, and (3) the number of defenders who will be arrayed against them.

A reference to diagrams on pages 82 and 83 will help to make this clearer. In the first diagram is shown the position if the stand-off half does not get straight before passing. He may think that because he runs until someone threatens to tackle him, he is, therefore, gaining ground. In reality he is merely running across the face of his opponents, and by so doing sends the whole line off obliquely across the field towards the touch line, uses up space which ought to belong to his centre, and so crowds the whole line, and by passing while still running across he does not pull up his *vis-a-vis*, who is free to run on and back up the other defenders.

The attackers require as much room as possible in which to dodge and swerve, and the defence is the more difficult to penetrate the more closely massed it is, and so by crowding the attack and massing the defence, the stand-off half in this case has taken the best method to ensure that the attack will fail.

By running too far across before passing a stand-off half practically destroys his three-quarters' chances; by running straight, he preserves these chances and leaves his three-quarters in position to take advantage of them.

The diagrams shown on pages 82 and 83 have been drawn to indicate the position.

. . . . . .

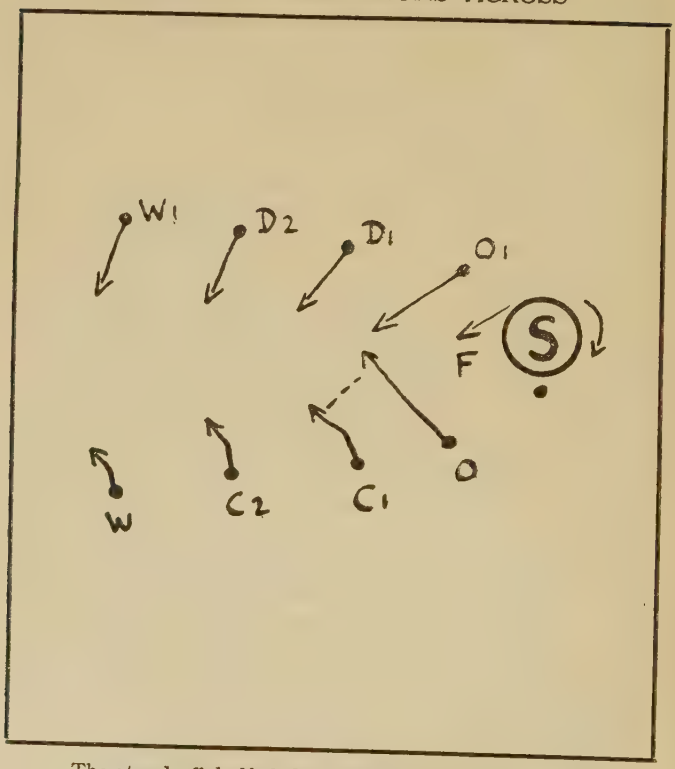
The centre three-quarters have the duty of distributing the ball; of making openings; of piercing the defending three-quarter line themselves if possible; and at all

times, of making space for their wings. It may be that the wing is easily superior to the opposing wing, and that the best policy is to get the ball out to the wing as quickly as possible. In that case mere speed of passing will not accomplish the object if the centres do not draw at least their own men on to themselves, so as to leave the wing with only his opposing wing to deal with. That is merely another case of getting straight before passing. But if the wing is to beat his opponent he must have some room in which to do it. That is a matter of keeping the movement going straight down the centre of the field, and leaving plenty of room on the wings.

It may be that the centre, by giving a quick dummy, may outwit his opposite number and get through himself ; or by a deceptive move he may draw two defenders on to himself before passing ; or he may find the opposing centres a little out of position and slip between them (this is often done by running obliquely between two opponents if one of them has advanced too far) ; but, whatever the centres decide to do, their job is to make ground or openings, to keep the movement of the line straight, and to see that their wings have sufficient ground in which to get a chance to manœuvre. If the wing is obviously crowded, it is up to the centre to make room, or if he can't do so, to refrain from passing. Many a wing gets the ball heaved at him in impossible positions, and the centre probably imagines that he at anyrate has done his duty by passing, whereas the centre has really failed to do his part.

Centre three-quarter is a difficult position in which to excel. It is a busy and interesting position for a good, general-utility player. It is an enormously important

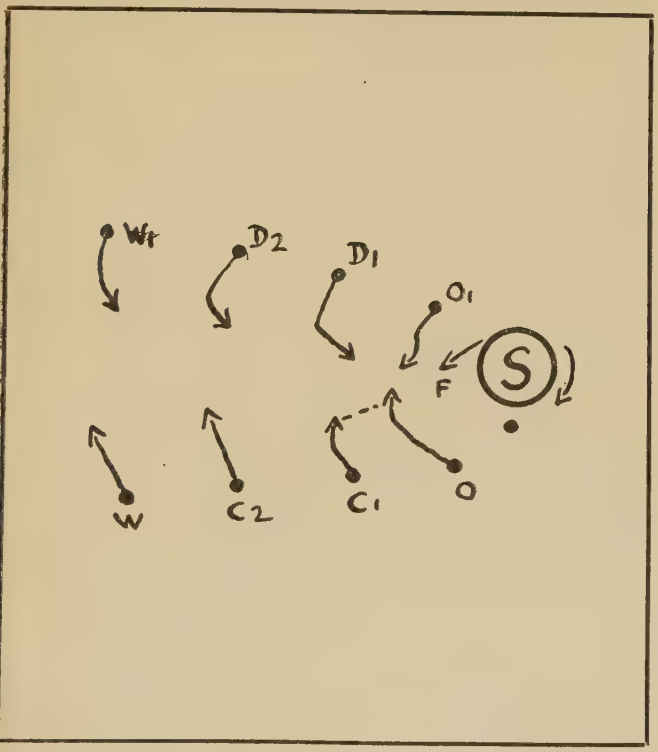
STAND-OFF HALF RUNS ACROSS



The stand-off half O has received the ball from his scrum, and runs too far across and passes without getting straight. He has not drawn any one of the defenders out of position, and leaves the opposing stand-off half and back row forward free to get across and help the defence. Also, he has sent his line off obliquely and cramped his centres.

O = Stand-off half.

STAND-OFF HALF DRAWING TWO MEN



The stand-off half O, by an extra spurt, or a side step, has persuaded D1 that he must tackle O. As soon as D1 changes direction and faces towards O, O breaks straight and passes. He has persuaded both O1 and D1 that they must tackle him, and has drawn D1 off C1, who has a chance to go through himself or also draw D2, and then pass to C2, who draws the wing W1, then lets his own wing away.

F = Wing forward.

position in the four three-quarter system, and the road to excelling lies along a thorough understanding of the geography of the field of play, until it becomes an instinct which enables the player to pick up the lie of the land at once and instantly to make good use of the situation.

The use of the dummy has already been indicated as one method of making use of the situation, but each player will work out the method which suits him best and which is the most appropriate in the circumstances. The art of dodging someone else is a very early element in play, and that art has to be adapted so that it will fit in with the movements of others. The whole art of dodging lies in deceiving one's opponent as to one's intentions, and as soon as he acts on what he thinks one is going to do, promptly doing something else which he is not prepared for. That something may be a change of direction or swerve, or side-step, or it may be a pretence to pass, a dummy ; but whatever it is, it must be timed to happen as soon as the opponent has made his mistake by acting on his (mistaken) idea of one's intention. As soon, for instance, as the giver of the dummy sees that his opponent is going to follow the ball in its anticipated flight, and not to tackle the passer, he refrains from passing and bursts past his opponent before he can recover his balance. In practically all cases of deceiving one's opponent when running with the ball a change of speed is part of the move. A side-step, for instance, makes the opponent hesitate for a moment, and at that moment the side-stepper crams on full sail. The deliberate use of a little extra pace at the moment after deception is the secret of many a player's successful dodging. Some players produce the deception by

holding the ball well in front of them and waving it from side to side while they themselves hardly deviate from the straight. The opposition are fascinated by watching the ball and the runner waves it in their faces and runs on before they have recovered from the illusion. Others, well poised on their hips, may produce a similar uncertainty by the movements of their upper body, while their legs carry them where they intend to go. The important point is that the opposition are there to be deceived or misled into thinking that the man with the ball is going to do something which he in actual fact has no intention of doing ; and the method is to give them a wrong idea, and, the moment they act on this (wrong) idea, to do the opposite. That may not sound like moral doctrine, but it is half the fun of the game. Rugby is a game of the wits as much as anything else.

Nor is the scrum half exempt from the use of his wits in attack. After sedulously getting the ball away from the scrum with rapidity and accuracy, and having given his opponents the (wrong) idea that he can do nothing else, and, therefore, need not be watched, he will find it pay to do the unexpected, and, instead of passing, suddenly to go on on his own. With luck he will be through the defending line at once and, well backed up by his stand-off half, wing forward and three-quarters, he may start a most profitable move.

The two halves, in fact, have a particular duty and excellent opportunities to work out tricks by which to deceive the opposition. Why should the stand-off half always pass to his centre, and why not slip the ball back to his scrum half who is up by arrangement to receive the pass ? A blind side move by the scrum half and wing

threequarter either by itself or supplemented by a kick-in from the wing to the centre is another excellent variant ; and a bright pair of halves can work out little surprises which will keep their opponents guessing. That is the special function of halves in attack—to keep their opponents guessing. And that, in turn, requires their own brains to be bright and busy.

The scrum half has also, of course, in defence the job of stopping rushes if the opposing forwards begin to break away with the ball at their feet. He can save his side many yards and much danger by doing this promptly. Further, he will do it with little or no risk to himself if he gets down on the ball at once before the forwards have a chance to open out. He can sometimes get the ball away to his backs even in these difficult circumstances.

CHAPTER X.

BACKS IN ATTACK—contd.

THE straightforward passing movement in which the ball is passed out to the wing is the basic attacking movement by the back division. It is supplemented by efforts to deceive the opposition on the part particularly of the stand-off half and the two centres, but it is the real foundation of back division play and, therefore, some simple remarks on it may be made before leaving it. In the beginning, probably the best position will be found to be that in which the three-quarters lie well behind one another. That has the advantage that the receiver of the pass has to run hard to get up to take his pass. That is a most important habit to get into—to be going hard when receiving a pass. Secondly, by lying well behind one another the attacking threequarters give themselves more space to work in—the opposition line is at some distance off and the attackers can see more clearly how the land lies.

The defect of this position is that if a pass goes astray or the movement breaks down, ground will be lost just because the backs are lying so far back inside their own territory. Nevertheless, it should be well practised, in order to give inexperienced centres confidence. If the opposing centres are too near, they are very apt to make inexperienced centres feel crowded and to make them flustered. The field in front of them, in fact, seems

dreadfully full of people, and they are apt to run across the face of their opponents instead of straight at them, whereas, if they start from well back they get a chance to see clearly, not only their opponents and at what angle they are running, but also the spaces between them.

On the other hand many an experienced three-quarter line will lie comparatively flat, that is, only slightly behind one another, and by quick starting and knowledge of one another will have no difficulty at all, and will have at the same time all the ground advantage of being further forward to begin with. In cases, however, where the defending line is getting too quickly down on the attackers, it will be found helpful to lie deeper and so get more space and time in which to act.

There remain the two wing players. Their first duty on receiving the ball is to run for all they are worth. The first duty of a wing is to go for the corner flag. If he does nothing else he will usually pay his way. There is a great temptation for a wing to break in towards the centre. This should be strictly avoided until the habit of going all out for the corner flag is thoroughly instilled. A wing racing down the field sees a defender racing equally hard across the field to cut him off. He knows that that defender is going all out and that if he suddenly breaks inward, he will almost certainly be able to cut inside that defender before the latter can stop himself. He may, and probably will, succeed in doing that, but that as a rule is the end of the wing, for there are several other defenders coming hard across, and he immediately brings himself within their reach. He, by breaking his stride and dodging inwards, has lost a yard or two, and whereas

a moment before he was out of their reach, he has now to dodge them also, and the chances are all against him.

A wing can pass outside a man far more often than he thinks, expecially if he can run almost right up to the point where he and his opponent seem bound to meet and then, with a sudden wiggle and an extra burst of pace, pass outside him. The defender instinctively tries to balance himself before tackling, and at that moment the wing side-steps outside of him, and is just sufficiently further away than he was a moment before to make the tackler hesitate, and in that moment the wing goes all out and is past before the tackle reaches him.

Alternatively, in the same circumstances, the wing can, shortly before he meets the defender, break his stride and pretend to pass in. The defender, or nine out of ten defenders, will pull up ; at that moment the wing sprints hard and is past him before he can recover.

In both these cases, the defender is reduced to a momentary state of suspended activity. It is for the wing to try to induce this moment of suspended activity and to take advantage of it.

The other main methods at the disposal of the wing are to kick ahead or to kick across. If he is faced by the full back in good position and has no real chance of passing him, he can kick past him and follow up. That, of course, must be timed so that the full back has the least chance of turning round and reaching the ball first. The other alternative is to kick into the centre of the field where his centre threequarters and his forwards ought to be following up. This is a very useful move, which for success depends largely on the kick being

accurately judged—high enough to give the centres, etc., time to get under it, and landing about the centre of the field.

Both of these kicking moves throw away the control of the ball, and should only be used when the wing sees that he has no other chance. His first duty is to go for the corner flag.

There will be, of course, circumstances in which it is right for the wing to swerve inward. It may be obvious that he cannot pass between a defender and the touch line. He should, however, as a rule, at once swerve outward again after he had passed the man, and resist the temptation to break in further. The corner flag should always be in his mind and his effort concentrated on it.

A wing should, of course, always carry the ball on the side removed from possible tacklers so as to leave his other hand free to hand people off. A right wing will carry the ball in his right hand, and ward tacklers off with his left ; and a left wing will carry it in his left hand. The left wing threeqarter must be able to kick with his left foot, so that he may be able to kick into the centre when necessary. All wing threequarters should cultivate the hand off, and should be on the alert to follow their centre if he breaks through.

In a passing movement all passes should be given and taken when going hard. To be standing still when receiving a pass is to throw away yards of distance. Passes should be given so that the receiver has to stretch to get them. It is a tremendous advantage if the receiver of the pass is going hard when he takes his pass and does not require to break his stride in order to take it.

Similarly, to slow up before passing means a delay which throws away yards, and enables the defence to get nearer than they would otherwise have been. The practice of giving and taking passes at full speed is extremely important.

A straightforward threequarter line attack is not always possible. Frequently the defence is as good as the attack, and persistently smothers the attacking three-quarters. In such circumstances, other methods of making progress must be tried. Suppose the forwards are not heeling quickly enough or the scrum half is not getting the ball away quickly enough to give the three-quarters a real chance and the centres find that they are being tackled with the ball too frequently, what can they do? First of all they can gain ground by kicking to touch. By so doing play is carried towards their opponents' line up to the point at which the ball goes into touch, and the process may be repeated until the enemy is driven right into his own territory, where passing attack may be profitably resumed again. Quite apart from a deliberate policy of driving the enemy back and gaining a foothold near his line by kicking to touch, there are many occasions when the only useful thing for a centre to do is to kick to touch. Kicking to touch is also a most useful method of resting one's forwards. It gains ground without any work on their part, and there are often times when forwards are hard put to it and require a little nursing. Stand-off halves and three-quarters should always have an eye to this. They can help their forwards greatly by judicious kicking to touch. But let them be sure that they find touch, for nothing tires forwards and wastes their energy more than having

to follow up hard after a kick which does not find touch and then be driven back by a touch-finding kick by an opponent. Instead of the game being twenty yards up the field it comes back to where it was, and the forwards have to set to again and struggle to regain the ground which their backs might have gained for them by making sure of finding touch.

Conversely, judicious kicking to touch is most wearing to the opposing forwards. To toil up the field only to be driven back by good touch kicking, and have to begin all over again, only, perhaps, to be driven back again and again, breaks the heart of an opposition pack ; and there may be times when a dose of that medicine is the best policy to pursue. One's own forwards may be getting ragged, and the opposition ones getting rampant. Good touch kicking judiciously applied will take the steam off the opposition and at the same time rest one's own forwards and let them find their breath and get together again. There is a real psychological moment for touch-kicking.

Such touch-kicking, however, savours more of defence than of attack—except when used to gain a footing in the enemy's territory—but kicking ahead is a distinct and useful move in attack, either when ordinary passing runs are proving useless, or as a variant to passing methods. Never let attack get monotonous, or so unvaried that the opposition can anticipate what is going to happen next. Here the kick-ahead comes in useful. When the centres find that by the time they get the ball, the opposition threequarters are so close upon them that they will be tackled if they pass, it is often a very paying move to punt over the heads of the

opposing threequarters across towards their own wing. The idea is to land the ball somewhere between their own wing and the opposing full back. Their own wing is already racing down the field and has only to race straight ahead. The opposing wing has been moving in the opposite direction and as the ball will land behind him, he has to stop, turn round, and start running backwards. All that takes time, and meanwhile the attacking wing, who has had a flying start, has passed him and is beating him in the race for the ball. The full back is coming across hard, but is probably not much nearer the ball than the attacking wing threequarter. Then everything depends on the bounce of the ball, and the different players' judgment of it. The bounce may favour the full back or it may go well for the attacking wing. In either case, the move has thoroughly upset the defence, and with luck it may produce a successful attack and a score. Much depends on the accuracy of the kick ahead so that it lands on the unprotected space, and sufficiently far away from the full back to give the wing a real chance.

The defect of the kick-ahead is that it throws away the control of the ball, and the attack gambles on its bounce. There is quite a sporting chance that the opposing full back may be given a simple opening to get in a big kick to touch if the kick is badly directed, or if he gets the luck of the bounce of the ball ; but the move is worth the risk when ordinary passing methods fail. But it must be kept as a variant only and not tried incessantly. If the opposition know what is going to happen, they will be prepared for it, and can easily score off it.

Another use of the kick-ahead can be made by using a very short kick and following up hard after it.

This can be usefully employed by a stand-off half either as a variant or in the failure of ordinary passing. A stand-off receives the ball and runs well up as if to try to pass between the opposing stand-off and centre, and then drops the ball to his toe and kicks it between them and races after it. They can't tackle him ; they have to turn round whereas the attacking stand-off goes straight on, and is practically certain to reach the ball before anyone else, unless he has kicked it hard enough to give the full back a chance. To prevent the full back getting a chance the kick must be a very short one. In fact, it is hardly a kick, rather a push of the ball through between two opponents. Futile, of course, if repeated constantly, but often effective as a surprise move.

When a threequarter line is bottled and passing brings no results, there are still then methods of breaking the defence, and the one mentioned first, namely, kicking over the heads of the opposing three-quarter line, in such a way that the attackers have at least as good a chance of regaining possession of the ball as the defenders have, is one standard method, but only the simplest form of it has been suggested. No book will ever catalogue and illustrate every move in the game—there is an infinite variety of possible combinations in Rugby—what is required is sufficient knowledge to know what to aim at and sufficient keenness to think out and try schemes of one's own based always on the sound principles of play. For instance, the kick-ahead to the wing might be improved upon by the stand-off half racing round to the blind side and taking his pass there. That would bring

the opposing full back and defence generally across towards him. If he then executed a kick across to his wing on the other side of the field, the defending full back would be upset and have to turn back, which would give the wing an advantage over him. The kick-ahead can be used at various times, but all that is emphasised here is that it is an alternative method of attack, and schemes for its use may be worked out. If passing by hand is impossible or useless, passing by kicking can still be tried. Further, the kick ahead has an unsettling effect on the defence, and while the defending line may have the upper hand so long as they know what to expect, their position and confidence will not be so good after being harried by some well-judged kicks ahead.

The Drop-at-Goal.

The dropped goal is a distinctive feature of Rugby and comes down to us from the time when kicking goals was the only object of the game. No other score counted. A run-in (the modern try) only entitled the successful side to a try-at-goal ; the try counted nothing. In these days, dropping goals was a frequent method of scoring, and is still to-day, but the art is neglected by far too many sides and players. It is a definite move in the game, and those who cultivate it get their reward.

The drop-at-goal must be considered in more than one aspect. It counts four points. Therefore it wipes out a deficit of three points and converts it into a credit balance of one point ; and so in a close game the gaining of a dropped goal may be invaluable, and may be the correct strategic move.

On the other hand, if a side is five points in arrears and there is only time for one possible score, it is sheer folly to waste that time by dropping a goal which merely occupies valuable time and leaves the other side still leading by a point.

The dropped goal has therefore to be considered, firstly, in relation to the score. Secondly, it must be considered in relation to the position of the attack, for if a good-going attack culminates in an unsuccessful drop-at-goal, the attack fails, and the defence gets relief and a much-needed breathing space. Judgment must be exercised as to whether it is better to drop and fail, or to drive home the attack even though it fail also. The driving home of the attack has the greater moral effect in shaking up the defence; for an unsuccessful drop is apt to leave the impression that the attack felt itself incapable of beating the defence. Judgment must therefore be exercised so that an otherwise successful attack may not be brought to nought by untimely and futile drops at goal.

A player has then always to decide whether the moment is appropriate for an attempt to drop a goal, but suppose that he judges that the moment is opportune, he must also be in a position on the field from which the dropping of a goal is not only possible, but likely. That has to be included in deciding whether the moment is a correct one or not for making the attempt.

There are two types of opportunity—one the snapping of a chance, the other a deliberate plan.

To those who can kick instantly and accurately with either foot opportunities occur in the course of play more frequently than is generally realised—the defending

forwards wheel the scrum, an attacking player picks up the ball, has no time to see where his colleagues are to pass to, but lets fly for goal before he is downed; or a pass goes astray among the attacking backs, there is no hope of reconstructing the run, but one of them sweeps in, picks up the ball, and almost in the same movement drops for goal.

Mistakes are sometimes brilliantly turned into points by a good goal-dropper.

The other type of dropped goal is the deliberately planned one. The attack is well inside their opponents' twenty-five, but the closer in they are the more massed is the defence, and that defence has proved impregnable. How is the attack to turn its superiority into points? In such circumstances the dropped goal is the appropriate move. Having warned his scrum half, the stand-off half lies well behind the scrum, so as to get plenty of room, then the ball comes out and he pops it over the bar.

Neither variety of dropped goal will, however, be successfully brought off if the art is not practised, especially with both feet. One no more gets something for nothing in Rugby football than in the rest of life.

CHAPTER XI.

COMBINED DEFENCE

SO far the importance of realising the direction of one's movements on the field has been emphasised from the point of view of the attack, but an understanding of the same principles of movement in relation to the field of play is also the foundation of effective defence. Everyone may realise that co-operation or combined movements are necessary in attack, each man trying to clear the way for his colleague ; but few realise that just as much co-operation and understanding is necessary in defence. " Tackle the man with the ball " is about all the instruction one ever gets, whereas the important point to grasp is that it is not enough for each man to go for the man with the ball independently of his neighbours' movements. Each must fit in his position and movements to those of his colleagues, just as much in defence as in attack.

What is the object of combining in defence ? It is the same as in attack, namely, to make the work of each easier and more certain of success. It is quite easy for an attacker to beat a single opponent or even several opponents if their position is not related in any way to one another or to the rest of the defenders. One very common case is two defending centres who act without reference to one another's position. For instance, if the centre next to the stand-off is lying behind the stand-off half, and the other centre, instead of also aligning himself on the stand-off half, is lying well

forward, the man with the ball will make for the gap between them. Each of the defending centres will feel bound, as he sees the situation, to go for the man with the ball, which is exactly what the attacker wants. Having drawn two men on to himself he promptly passes to his colleagues, who have now a man over.

Careless position at centre three-quarter is at the root of much weak defence. The centres should align themselves on the stand-off half and move together. In other words, they must combine and adjust their movements the one to the other, and avoid a zig-zag line, one forward and the other back.

Just as in attack the vitally important thing is to keep the movement going straight, so the real object of combined defence is to prevent the attack going straight, and to force it to move obliquely across the field. And this for two reasons: firstly, as we have seen, an attack which merely moves across the field does not make ground; and, secondly, in order that the defenders may have the easiest of tackles, a sideways tackle. A sudden straight-on tackle is a difficult tackle, but a side-on tackle is an easy one.

To force the attack to move across the field is the object of good defence, and in order to achieve that object the defenders must act, not as units independently, but as a line together, and must have a clear understanding of their position and movements in relation to one another. And so in defence a clear conception of the geography of the field is just as necessary as in attack. The one side is striving to move straight down the centre of the field, the other has to arrange its position and movements so as to prevent it doing so.

COMBINED DEFENCE

To prevent the attack moving straight, then, is one of the main objects of good defence. To achieve it requires combination and a complete understanding among the defending backs of how each one is to act. Take a typical case: an attacking stand-off half will try to draw both the defending stand-off and a centre on to himself before he passes. A skilful defending stand-off will keep between the attacker and the scrum and approach him in such a way that he (the attacking stand-off) cannot break inwards towards the scrum, which would bring him into the straight line down the field. Realising that he cannot get straight, the attacking stand-off will either pass at once (without having gained any advantage for his three-quarters) or will make for the defending centre, to reach whom he must continue running obliquely. The defending stand-off is inside him, forcing him across the field, and his only hope is to tempt the centre to tackle him. "Tackle the man with the ball—you can't be blamed if you go for the man with the ball." If the defending centre acts on that advice, the attacker succeeds, and, having drawn two men, he passes at once.

If, on the other hand, the defending centre leaves the man with the ball alone to be tackled by the stand-off half, then he in turn is on the inside of the centre opposite to him, and forces him across the field also on his receiving the ball, or tackles him if he attempts to go straight. And so on it goes to the wing, who is left with little room, and with the defending wing still in position to tackle him; but it requires mutual confidence on the part of the defenders to bring it off, and assured knowledge of one another's position and tactics. It requires confidence

and a cool head, for instance, on the part of the first centre to refrain from going for the attacking stand-off half, and he must be sure that his own stand-off can cope with the situation.

There should also be an understanding between the wing three-quarters and the full-back in the event of a defending wing being left with two men to tackle. In this case the defending centres have been drawn and the defending wing faces the attacking centre (who has the ball) and his wing. The defending wing has three alternatives.

Firstly, he can go for the man with the ball and leave the wing to the full-back, but if the centre passes before he can be tackled he is free to run on and receive an in-pass from his wing when the latter is faced with the full-back.

Secondly, the defending wing can take a dummy from the attacking centre, and whip round and run between him and his wing, ready to tackle the wing (an easy side-ways tackle from behind) if the centre passes. He thus leaves the attacking centre to the full-back. But the centre is embarrassed. He cannot swerve outwards towards the touch-line because the defending wing is outside him ; his swerve must be towards the centre of the field, but streaming across the field are other de-fenders, halves and wing-forwards for instance, towards whom the full-back will force him. And so between the defending wing outside him, the full-back in front of him, and other defenders coming across inside him the attack-ing centre is, or ought to be, caught, and the movement smothered as effectively as if the defending wing had gone for the man with the ball in the first instance.

Thirdly, the defending wing may try to get on the inside of the attacking centre, and push both him and the wing nearer to the touch-line.

But whatever method is adopted the full-back should have a clear understanding with the wing. On all other occasions the tackling of the man with the ball must be instant and certain.

It is not merely the backs, however, who are involved in a combined defence. It is essentially a forward's duty as well, and no defence is more difficult to break through than a good three-quarter line reinforced by intelligent forwards who know where to be and how to tackle.

So long as the ball is in the scrum a forward's duty is to shove, but as soon as the ball is out the forwards must get out into the open at once and combine with the backs. Then the whole side works together. The duty of breaking up at once falls first of all on the back-row forwards, but it applies to all the forwards. In defence one of the wing forwards may have the chance of worrying the opposing scrum half. One should, in any case, assist his own stand-off half to prevent the opposing stand-off half from swerving inwards and passing between the defending stand-off and the scrum. A wing forward can very usefully fill the gap between his own stand-off half and the scrum. If the attacking stand-off half cannot break inwards, *i.e.*, into the straight line down the field, and has the defending stand-off and a wing forward on his inside, he has no option but to run across the field, and the first step in preventing the attack moving straight has been successfully taken.

The other forwards will make a bee-line across the field behind their own three-quarters in the direction of

their own full-back. By doing so they help to block the way if a centre does break through, or will restrict the movements of the opposing wing if he gets away, or they may get across in time to tackle the wing. Even though they do not get across in time to tackle the wing, their presence is invaluable, for they prevent the wing from breaking in towards the centre of the field when faced by the full-back. Hemmed in by forwards coming across, the wing is forced to try to pass between the full-back and touch, which gives the full-back the easiest of tackles.

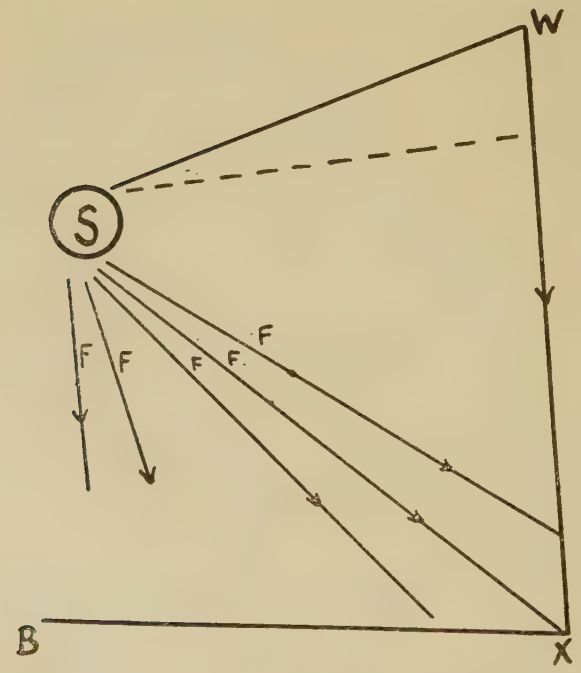
Further, the slower forwards will be moving backwards more in the centre of the field, and will be of immense use if the wing kicks in. The kick-in must be carefully guarded against, for the defending centres are out of position, and the job of taking their place in the event of a kick-in often falls to a forward.

In short, the whole fifteen men in a side are involved in defence, and must combine with one another. Successful participation only demands sufficient knowledge of the game to anticipate intelligently where the ball is most likely to go to, and then to get there. It cannot always be done, nor will the ball always arrive, but the time comes more often than not when it does arrive, and the player in the right position brings off a fine piece of work for his side.

The diagram represents a passing run with the wing threequarter W getting clear away. The defending threequarters are roughly indicated by a dotted line. B is the defending full back, and X the point at which B and W will meet. Three forwards are shown coming across to intercept the wing. Whether they reach him or not it is obvious that their presence will embarrass W

if he tries to swerve inwards. That forces him to try to pass outside B (who is at the point X), *i.e.*, between B and the touch line, and that gives B an easy side-on tackle. But for the forwards W could have swerved to either side of B.

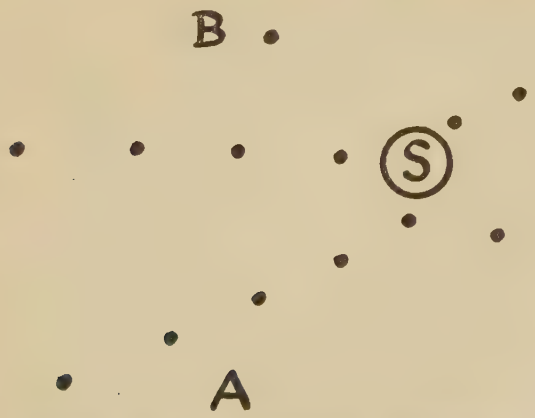
FORWARDS CO-OPERATING IN DEFENCE.



The excellent chance of the forwards being of use in this way, if they break up at once, should be clearly realised. The ball has to travel from S to W and from W to X,

two sides of a triangle of which the line SX is the third. Now SX is shorter (as proved by Euclid) than the sum of SW + WX, and even allowing for the fact that the ball is passed by hand from S to W, the forwards have a very good chance of getting across in time to be of great service. Other two forwards are shown falling back to cover a kick-in.

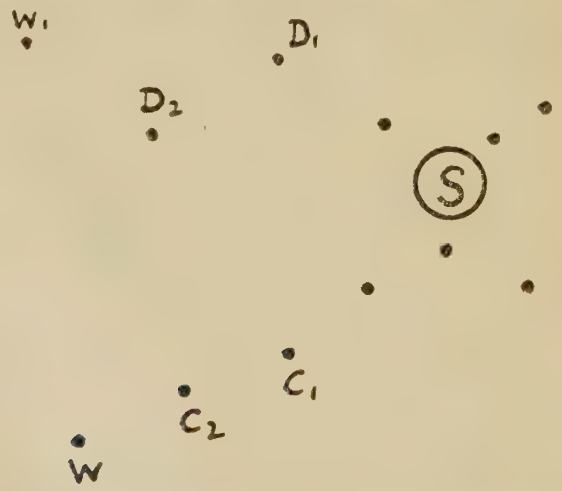
The backs in defence, then, should act not as independent individuals but together as a combined arrangement. When it is seen that the opposing forwards have got the ball in the scrum and are heeling it, the defending backs will at once get as far forward as they can without getting off-side, in other words, without getting in front of the ball. In this position they will form practically a straight line across the field nearly level with the scrum ready to dash forward to tackle the attacking three-quarters as soon as the ball is out.



A has the ball, *B's* backs forward for defence.

In this position they will be as near as they can possibly get to the attacking line, and will therefore get down on their opponents in the shortest possible time, thus giving the attackers the minimum of time or space in which to act. If the defending threequarters can, owing to slow heeling or other delay on the part of the attack, get right forward before the ball comes out and all go hard in on their respective men, and do it together the moment the ball is out, they have every chance of smothering the attacking centres and of tackling them before they can pass.

They must, however, act together and in relation to one another. One centre forward and the other back is a very dangerous position, and comes about merely because each centre is acting on his own.



In the illustration given, for instance, the unrelated

positions of D and D2 give an obvious opportunity to C1 to pretend to run between them and either pass between them or at least draw both of them on to himself and so clear the way for C2.

The backs should know exactly what their colleague is going to do, and should act just as fully in co-operation with one another in defence as they do in attack.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PLACE OF THE FORWARDS IN ATTACK

IF the defence, by combining together, is sufficient to prevent the attack making progress, and attack and defence is equal as between the two back divisions, then the position is one of stalemate. To what, then, can either side look to gain an advantage?

The key of the situation lies in the forwards. On the play of the forwards the opportunities of the backs depend. In a set scrum quickness of heeling will give the backs an attacking advantage by letting them away before their opponents get into position to smother them, at the close of an open rush a quick heel lets the backs away when the defence is disorganised; a quick piece of work at the line-out, or a pass from a loose rush, may bring a similar advantage; backing-up the three-quarters and joining in their movement may carry a movement to success when it would otherwise have ceased. These are instances in which forwards can make all the difference between the success of two equal back divisions.

Before dealing in detail with the co-operation of forwards in attack, let us get some idea of a modern forward. In the early days of Rugby the forwards were the main part of the side. It was they who attacked, they who passed and tackled and won or lost the game.

Thereafter, as back division play developed, the emphasis was put on the backs, and the forwards came to be looked upon merely as heavy—if not stupid—people, whose only duty was to get the ball out to the backs. To-day, no pack will survive which is merely dull, heavy and stupid, and the forward line is re-established in its older, higher function of being the most versatile and complete footballers in the side.

The modern forward must certainly be a sound scrummager ; for the beating of the other side for the ball is essential, and included in scrummaging is the art of wheeling and countering an opposition wheel. He must also be a good dribbler. In attack, he must be able to handle and pass : in defence, he must be a sure tackler. Above all, he must have a clear and intelligent idea of position and the run of the game, and be at the spot at which he is most likely to be of use at any given moment.

The older type of forward regarded only the scrum as his duty. On the break-up of the scrum, he waited for the next one. He drew a definite distinction between the functions of the forwards and the backs, and did not see why he should do anyone else's work.

To-day, besides being an intelligent scrummager and a fierce dribbler, he should be able to handle as well as any back, be as good a tackler and as good a kick, so that when by accident or by intelligent anticipation of the run of the play he gets a chance of doing something for his side he is ready and able to do it.

In the tight, scrummaging is the forwards' duty ; in the open, it is backing-up. Backing up covers a multitude of odd jobs, but in it lies the secret of success of team play. In backing up, whether in attack or defence,

the forwards are the vital factor, and can revel in the use of their wits as well as their brawn.

We have already seen how forwards have a definite duty and function in defence, and how, by combining their movements with those of their backs, they can cover up vulnerable parts of their side's defence, and effectively check the attack. Similarly, in attack, the forwards should take a definite place in attacking movements, and by co-operating with their backs further the success of their side.

Apart from quick heeling in a set scrum which may give their backs a chance to get moving before the defending backs have time to get up into position, the best co-operation which forwards can offer to their backs is by fast, dribbling rushes, and then letting their backs have the ball at once. A good forward rush disorganises the defending backs, and gives the attacking backs a glorious opportunity if they get the ball. If a forward rush gets going, probably both the defending halves and both the centres are occupied in stopping it. If so, there are only the two wings and the full back left in position, whereas the whole attacking back division is ready and straining at the leash. If the forwards, when they are checked, or even though they are not, but they see that they have drawn the defending centres, would walk over the ball, or heel it back to their halves, they would give their side the finest chance of scoring they could have.

In the heat of a forward rush, forwards too often carry on till they are definitely held up, and time is wasted, a set scrum formed, and the defending backs given the chance to get back into position; but the rush which

gives the ball to the backs while the defence is disorganised is one of the most fruitful moves in the game.

Take the case of a set scrum, however. The forwards heel, the threequarters get on the move; what do the attacking forwards do? In the open, to be always on the ball is the forward's whole duty, but he obviously cannot, say, fly out to the wing and back again as quickly as the ball, so his job is to use his intelligence and judge where the ball is likely to go, and then to get there as quickly as possible.

As a general rule, straight up the centre of the field, spreading out as they go, is the forwards' best move. If the wing finds himself blocked by the full back and defending forwards coming across he will kick in, and the attacking forwards will be in position to be on the ball or on the defender who fields it, and in the one case carry on the attack, or in the other prevent the defender kicking to touch, and by so doing will secure the ground gained by the threequarters, instead of letting a defender recover it by a kick to touch. Similarly, if the wing passes in, the forwards are ready in the centre to join in the passing movement. There are few finer movements in the game than the ball going out to the wing and coming in to the centre again with a line of eager forwards ready to carry on the movement.

Or if a centre breaks through—if the forwards are backing him up he has the choice either of passing out to the wing, or of passing in to the centre. The defence is probably moving towards the wing, and the centre is more or less open, and forwards who are up and capable of handling, both give and get a great opportunity.

Backing up, combined with intelligent anticipation of

the run of the game, along with a clear conception of the geography of the field, will bring keen forwards opportunities in attack, the taking of which will bring success to the side.

The forwards get other opportunities in attack, if they are on the outlook for them, and can take advantage of them. In the average game there is a good deal of loose play, when the forwards are neither in a set scrummage nor in a definite dribbling rush. On such occasions a good forward can often pick up the ball and pass it out to his backs. A forward, indeed, often finds himself unexpectedly in possession of the ball, and only too often he has no idea what to do with it, and does nothing with it, whereas a good pass out to his backs might have let his side away, or, alternatively, a sound kick to touch may give it an attacking advantage.

There is nothing so futile and stupid on the football field as a forward who suddenly finds the ball in his hands and can only regard it with horror and mental paralysis. Every forward should practise passing and the taking of passes, so that he can give a good hard pass when the chance occurs, or can even sling the ball half-way across the field to an unmarked three-quarter.

Further, every forward should diligently practise the giving of dummy passes, until he can give them quickly and instinctively. The opposition, when it sees that a forward has the ball, is apt to take for granted that he will pass in a straightforward manner, and therefore they go for the receiver of the pass, confident that the forward has no guile and will give a slow, lobbing pass. In almost every case the opposition is right. The forward ambles across the field, passes when threatened, and, by not

breaking the angle of his running, enables the tackler not only to make him pass, but also to carry straight on towards the receiver of the pass.

The defence could be upset by forwards who can hand out dummies, and the attack would receive their passes going straight from forwards who had learned the art.

The line-out from touch is another opportunity for the forwards to co-operate in attack. Good work at touch often leads to a dribbling rush at the end of which a quick heel lets the backs away ; but forwards can, when the opportunity occurs, sling out a long pass to their backs from the line-out. The ball has to be caught cleanly first of all, and a second of time must be wasted by the opposition, but some forwards are extremely clever at this move. As soon as they have jumped for and caught the ball their backs are turned on their opponents and a pass is slung out to their own men.

Well done, the move is very effective ; badly done, it is dangerous. A deliberate move like this is to be clearly distinguished from the futile knocking or fisting back of the ball which some forwards indulge in. That is wholly dangerous. The ball seldom reaches the right man, and if it does not the opposing forwards will get down on it in a dribbling rush. The pass out must be a clean, well-directed one, or not made at all.

Rugby was originally almost entirely a forward game and the changes in formation have been sketched in order that it may be realised how, under the motive of an increase in scoring power, Rugby has changed from a purely forward game to one in which the scoring emphasis is on the backs. In some cases this emphasis on the backs caused forwards to lose their high con-

ception of their place and function in the side, and they have ceased to realise that it is they, and not the backs, to whom it falls to be the most complete and versatile footballers in the team. The ordinary conception of a forward has too often been that of a poor muddied oaf whose only job is to get the ball out of a disorderly scrum for the backs. To-day, for instance, the pack which handles well in the open is exceptional and is spoken of with wonder, but in the late seventies and subsequent years, they had packs who were the attackers of the side—fast, hard dribblers, keen tacklers and skilful handlers, as brilliant in the open as they were hard-working in the scrum.

The balance of the game to-day requires to be re-adjusted, not by diminishing back play, but by adding to it forward play, which will re-establish the pack in its full function.

Now, the glory of playing forward is mainly this, that instead of regarding himself as one of the "dumb, driven cattle" of the game, useful only to provide the backs with the ball, the forward should be the most complete footballer in the side—fast, as good a handler as any back, as good a tackler, as good a kick, and over and above all that, a fierce dribbler and intelligent scrummager, pitting his brain and brawn in conjunction with seven others against another band of equally complete footballers. To the forward, the scrum and line-out from touch and the combined rush are special ploys in which the backs have no part or claim, and yet he can be as efficient in the special work of the backs as the backs themselves.

The first duty of the forward is certainly to get the ball,

but the getting of it involves a series of triumphs, getting down first and low, beating his opponents in packing tight, beating them for the first shove, and heeling cleanly or outwitting them in a wheel. Every move demands keenness and brain work and intelligent co-operation with others. Only intelligent work brings the joy of achievement, and every act of the forward requires intelligence.

The scrum every forward accepts as his duty; it is on the break-up of the scrum that the sheep are divided from the goats. The bad, unintelligent, uninspired forward seems to imagine that his work finishes with the scrum; and mentally, if not actually, he puts his hands in his pockets, and waits until it is time to lumber up to another scrum. He draws a definite distinction between the functions of the forwards and the backs and does not see why he should do any more work than necessary. Such a forward does not realise that besides being a member of the pack he is a member of the team. He has no conception of team play, or of the fact that it is as a team his side will win, and not as fifteen individuals working under trade union rules. The forward who does as little as possible will not only be a bad forward, but will have little joy in playing.

The whole duty of the forward in the open may be summed up as backing up, which may seem a dull job, but is one which can be made brilliant by intelligent anticipation of the run of the play, and by being able to do whatever is necessary at any moment. The joy of dribbling, the joy of tackling, the joy of handling all belong to the forward in the open, and also the joy of anticipating, for the ideal forward must have such a

knowledge, not only of his own functions, but of back-division movements both in attack and defence, that he can intelligently anticipate the run of the play.

Forwards would add greatly to their enjoyment of the game if they equipped themselves for it to the full. So often a forward who suddenly finds the ball in his hands at once loses his wits and is obviously lost. He can kick with neither foot, he does not know how to pass, or where to run, and he looks as big a fool as it is hoped he feels.

Why should forwards be content with only the dull parts of their job, instead of being ready for every emergency? Expert in their own special work in the scrum, it is within their power to show when called upon to take their part in the open that they are as fully equipped as any back and that they have realised the glory of playing forward by being the most complete and versatile footballers on the field.

CHAPTER XIII.

TACKLING AND OTHER MATTERS

RUGBY is a game which few ever think of learning except by playing in a game or match. In other games, tennis or golf, for instance, considerable time is given to lessons, or tuition of some sort, and the practice of strokes, and the theory of the game. In Rugby, such preliminary study and practice is practically neglected. One is put into a team and told to play, and in order to make playing more enjoyable one trains by practising running to make oneself more physically fit to play.

The present chapters have been written on the principle that there is much in Rugby which should be learned and understood before attempting to play seriously, just as in every other sphere of learning much has to be learnt before sitting examinations. Now, however, we come to a subject which can only be learnt in actual play, viz., tackling. The theory of tackling may, however, be understood before putting it into practice, but it is difficult to define. Once the art is acquired, one tackles, but few could describe how they tackle.

The object of tackling is to stop the man with the ball from running any further than he has done. He must be stopped, and stopped definitely. But the man with the ball is not merely an individual, he is only one of a

team, and, therefore, the team must be stopped by the stopping of the man with the ball. That is to say, to be successful the tackle must not only stop the man with the ball, but must also prevent him from handing on the ball to someone else. Further, if the tackle does not succeed in preventing the ball being passed on, it should prevent the man who is tackled from being able to run on and help his colleagues. A tackle should put the man who is tackled out of action—in other words, it should bring him to the ground, and the more definitely the better.

Tackling, as distinct from tripping, hacking, charging, or other methods of obstruction, is the means by which a side is permitted to prevent the other side running with the ball, and therefore it should be learned, understood, and diligently practised. It is one of the fundamentals of the game, and is the backbone of a team's strength. With it, a side is founded on solid rock ; without it, a side has no sure foundation at all.

A side in which every one of the fifteen men can be relied upon to tackle his man becomes at once a difficult side to score against. The knowledge that it is secure in its defence brings a confidence which is the foundation of development and team consciousness. On that foundation a side can build up confidence in attack and play with some abandon and zest. Whereas if a side knows that it is liable to be run through whenever the other side gets the ball, that side will have no confidence in itself, and each game will bring dispirited failure with it. Tackling is a spirited thing, and its effect is tonic.

The object of tackling, then, is to stop, and to stop definitely, the movement of the other side. To be

successful, the tackle must bring the man with the ball down ; it must, if possible, prevent him passing the ball on to others ; and it must, in any case, put him temporarily out of action. How is it done ?

The object of tackling is to stop the man with the ball, but that man with the ball is running hard, say, an average man of eleven and a half stone going at a rate of eight yards to a second. That represents a considerable force, and that force has got to be brought instantly to a standstill. So the point to be clearly realised is that there must be a great driving force in the tackle. Otherwise it will fail. It is no use, for instance, trying to stop such a man by leaning up against him, or by holding out one's hands, or by pawing his chest and shoulders, or by bending down and fiddling with his knees. Going at full pace, with his weight behind him, he will brush aside any such attempt to stop him.

The tackle must have the full weight of the tackler behind it, and, further, the force of that weight must be greater than the force of the runner with the ball. That is accomplished thus :—The force of the runner is made up of his weight, plus his velocity or the rate at which he is running ; the force of the tackler is made up of the same two elements, but to these he adds the force of gravity.

In other words, when the tackler reaches the man with the ball he must be falling, and must let his full dead-weight descend on his victim. That is why small men can be quite as good tacklers as big men—even their dead-weight is quite sufficient to bring down the biggest man if it is attached by a firm grip to an opponent's legs. The whole secret of successful tackling lies in getting

your full dead-weight into the tackle. To obtain the full force of that weight the tackler must have thrown himself off his balance, and must be falling. Putting it otherwise, he hurls himself into space, and the only hope of his not coming down with a crash is that he meets the man with the ball in mid-air, and clings on to him with all the fierceness of a drowning man clutching his rescuer, and brings him down with a crash instead.

The throwing of oneself into space must be emphasised. Without it, the tackle will lack the force of the dead-weight of the tackler which is essential to success. The literal hurling of oneself into space, however, only occurs when the man with the ball is almost out of reach ; when he is nearer, the leap is represented by a push off from the ground which drives one's weight hard against one's opponent, shoulder to the thighs and then the grip with the hands.

In tackling, the grip should be as low as possible, but it is a mistake—and a bad one—to try to grip with the hands first before getting one's weight in. The first impact should be made with the weight of the body with the arms ready to swing round the opponent's legs as soon as contact is made. Hurling oneself at an opponent from the side, one's shoulder must meet his thigh first above the knee, and almost simultaneously one's arms should wrap themselves round his legs. Then grip for all you are worth, and the man, suddenly deprived of his legs, will come down—and should be so busy thinking of the rapidity with which he is coming down that he will be much too flustered to pass, and so the ball will come down also and the tackle will have been completely successful.

Tackling is a venture of faith—the tackler throws himself at the runner and hopes for the best—but it is no use funking it or hesitating. To do either of these things is to invite failure, either by missing the man, or getting hurt, or both. To hesitate or to make an indefinite show of tackling is to make certain of getting hurt. There is no surer way of getting hurt than to lie up against the knees of a man who is running hard. Go bald-headed for it, and you will not get hurt, but will be thrilled to do it again and again.

In the foregoing remarks a tackle from the side—the easiest and most frequent type of tackle—has been presumed. There are, however, occasions when one must tackle straight, or face to face, as at centre three-quarter, or close to the line when the man with the ball must be held up. On these occasions one must not tackle low, for the object is not to bring the man down, but to hold him up—exactly the reverse of the usual. To bring off such a tackle successfully, a defending centre threequarter must get down on his man so that he arrives at almost the same moment as the ball. Then he hurls himself straight at him and wraps his arms round his opponent and the ball, and instantly prevents him passing, not by gripping his ankles, but by pinioning his arms in a close embrace.

Similarly, when close to the line, to go low gives the opponent the opportunity to topple over with his arms and the ball free, which is exactly what the tackler wishes to avoid, and therefore one goes high enough to prevent that. If very close the tackler may get in a smother tackle, enfolding ball, arms and body, but if that is not possible, go for the man's waist with sufficient forward

push to heave the top part of his body backwards. He will be knocked off his balance and will fall backwards and not forwards.

No matter what kind of a tackle has to be made the main principle is the same, viz., there must be driving force behind it. The whole weight must be thrown into it, either with a good push-off or an actual spring. That push-off or spring must be aimed to carry right past the man to be tackled ; that is to say, the tackler must aim to drive his weight right through the man to be tackled. If he aims merely to reach the near side of him, he will not have sufficient force or weight to effect a tackle, but will be brushed aside. Aim beyond the man so as to take him en route and carry him with you, and as soon as you touch him, grip hard. Tackling is one of the most definite things in Rugby. There must be a definite, determined effort, a definite, determined hurling of the body forward, and a definite and determined grip when the bodies meet.

The Hand-Off

What defence has a man running with the ball to ward off a tackle and to make it ineffective ? First of all, of course, he can evade the tackler either by speed or by swerving or side-stepping away from the would-be tackler, so that the latter does not quite reach him. It does not take much to put oneself just out of reach of the full force of a tackle, and, as we have seen, if the full force of the tackle is not present at the moment at which the tackler reaches the man with the ball, then the tackler can be brushed aside, for he will not stop the momentum of an average heavy man going hard.

So if the man with the ball can move out of the way of a tackler even a couple of yards, he may miss the full force of the tackle, and probably only the tackler's arms will touch him with no weight or power behind them. Conversely, there is a point for the tackler, if he hesitates even a fraction of a second the man with the ball may cover these two yards which will just make all the difference between a successful tackle and an unsuccessful one.

One frequent method of making a tackler hesitate is to pretend to pass in ; the tackler going hard, say, for the touch-line, instinctively draws up—but the man with the ball goes on harder than ever, and by the time that the tackler is ready to spring again, his opponent is just out of reach. He may touch him, but he is too late to bring him down. The hesitation for a fraction of a second has given the runner just the extra yards he wanted ; by making the tackler hesitate he has caused the human missile, which should have hurled at him, to suspend itself for a moment while he slips past. Never hesitate in tackling. Tackle first, wonder what the man is going to do afterwards.

Secondly, the man with the ball has an excellent defence in the hand-off. This should be acquired particularly by all wing three-quarters. The idea of the hand-off is that the runner, by means of a stiff arm with his weight behind it, fends off his opponent and at the same time uses the force of the tackler to push himself out of range of the tackle. A wing threequarter is racing down the touch-line, an opponent is coming hard across and is bound to meet him. As that opponent launches himself at the wing threequarter's legs, the runner bends inwards towards the tackler, shoots out a

stiff arm, and opposes his open hand firmly to the tackler's face. Note, firstly, that the runner's body, *i.e.*, his weight, must be bent towards the tackler, otherwise his arm will have no weight behind it. Secondly, the tackler's head will be lower than the runner's shoulder, for he will be aiming at the thighs, and that, therefore, the push of the hand-off will be in a downward direction. The result is that the tackler's head, instead of burying itself in the runner's thighs, meets the runner's stiff arm before it can reach his thighs, and that arm is pushing downward; so the tackler's force is deflected downward, and he meets the ground far sooner than anticipated, while the runner pushes off and goes on. The hand-off, in other words, makes the tackle drop short of its objective.

The runner, by bending inward towards the tackler, causes his knees to be as far away from his opponent as possible, while his outstretched arm keeps the tackler literally at arm's length from his objective. The tackler's weight meeting the runner's open hand, backed by a stiff arm with weight behind it, is deflected downward and drops useless to the ground, while the runner, receiving the force of the tackle on his outstretched arm, is thrown back into an upright balance again, and is free to run on. Thus the hand-off not only frustrates a tackle, but the hander-off, by means of the support received from the force behind the tackler, gets a good push off which helps him on his way.

Saving

Tackling is the method or art of stopping the man who is carrying the ball; saving is the method or art of stopping the man who is dribbling the ball. In other

words, it is the method of stopping a forward rush. A combined dribble or rush is in progress, and a defender has to stop it. He flings himself on the ball so that it can no longer be dribbled. In doing so, however, there are one or two points to make sure of. Firstly, the defender must make sure of getting the ball. If he does not secure the ball it remains free to be dribbled. Securing the ball demands keeping the eye on it and paying no attention to the nasty-looking feet of the dribbling forwards. Also it demands judgment in timing the right moment to fall on the ball. It is no use, for instance, falling if it is obvious that a dribbler's foot will reach it first and push it away. The right moment must be chosen when the saver has a good, if not certain, chance of reaching the ball first.

Secondly, some commonsense must be used. It is, for instance, sheer folly to dive head first among the knees and boots of raging forwards. One is certain to be hurt, and deservedly hurt. The right and sensible way to save is to fling oneself on the ball so that one's back is to the opposition, one's head tucked into one's chest, and the ball shielded by one's body. The saver should arrange to fall between the ball and the dribbling forwards; he will, if possible, fall upon their insteps or ankles, which not only severely incommodes them by making them stumble, but also ensures that he will not get kicked. Having secured the ball, he must get up instantly, if he can.

There are occasions, of course, when the saver can await the dribblers facing them, that is, head-on to them, but he will either go in when they have kicked the ball

too far ahead, or else, as they reach him, he will in falling turn sideways so as to fall on their ankles with his back towards them, and his head out of danger. There is no danger in good saving. Players who hesitate or funk are the ones who get hurt.

CHAPTER XIV.

FULL-BACK

THE full-back position has been kept to the end because although the full-back is one of the fifteen and has to combine with them and add his quota to the team-work of the side, he is, more than any of the others, an individual standing apart.

There is no place in a Rugby XV. more unwillingly filled than full-back. Only too frequently the place is filled not from choice but from necessity, with the result that the unwilling and unhappy player finds the place a poor one, and proclaims the fact loudly, until a powerful tradition has grown up that full-back is a rotten place to play, and young players who might be attracted to the position are discouraged.

Full back, on the contrary, is really the finest place on the field, and the only way to play full-back is to realise that it *is* the finest place on the field. To the ambitious it is the place to shine, and rapidly to become pre-eminent; to the independent, it is the only place where responsibility and credit are not shared ; to the courageous, it offers never-ending attractions ; and to the cool head and steady nerve, it provides work to revel in. It is an attractive position which appeals to personality, for the full-back has a vocation of his own to make or to mar. He does not bury himself amid seven others and toil and sweat always giving way to others ; he is no mere link,

under the tyranny of the thought of the threequarter line behind him; nor is he merely one of four whose movements are dependent on those of his colleagues. He is an individual, a free lance, holding the key to the stability of his own side, and in a position to bring the efforts of the opposition to nought.

There is a great spice of adventure and enterprise in the full-back position. Alone he faces rushing forwards, knowing that in position and possessed of sure hands, he has the initiative, not they, and he can choose his moment to sweep up the ball and dodge through the stumbling forwards before they can check themselves sufficiently to tackle him. Alone he races for the flying wing, knowing that by position again he can force his opponent on to a course from which there is no escape, and then a rush, a tackle, and glorious satisfaction. If he plays correctly he has the advantage every time, and it is only when some one in front of him has blundered that he is left in a hopeless position, and in that case the blame is not his. On the other hand, by sure saving, and sure handling and kicking, he can fill his own side with a confidence which enables them to play their own game without fear or anxiety. The full-back, in fact, has a far more positive work for his side than is generally realised. He is for one thing a great moral influence. The confidence of a side in itself depends largely on whether they have confidence in their full-back or not. There is nothing like a shaky full-back for destroying the confidence of the side. No one knows what may happen when he is called upon, and the consequent strain and physical efforts necessary to cover him up in case of accidents add greatly to the wear and tear of the

game. A sound full-back is the rock on which the confidence of a team should be founded.

Further, a good full-back is a very positive factor in beating the other side, for quite apart from his function of preventing them from scoring, he has a definite function to perform in tiring out the opposition forwards. This is done first of all by making absolutely sure that he finds touch every time he kicks for touch, and, secondly, by making the opposition forwards expend as much energy as possible before he kicks.

It is heart-breaking to forwards to be driven back by good touch kicking, and to see all the ground which they have gained by toil and sweat recovered by a good full-back who sends them back to begin all over again. It can, however, be made all the more heart-breaking if the full-back draws them on as far as possible before kicking. Time and again a full-back kicks while he has still ten yards of free space to move in instead of advancing as far as possible before kicking. The forwards don't bother to charge on over these ten yards if they see that the full-back is going to kick in any case. They should be tempted to expend as much energy as possible. Every full-back should remember that he has a definite function to tire out the opposition forwards as much as possible.

Further, there may be occasions when the full-back can rightly and usefully join in the attack. Experience will indicate when this can be done, and one or two bad mistakes will teach him the lesson quicker than anything else, but the chance does occur and should be taken, but, as soon as possible, the full-back, having done his bit, should get back to his place and let others carry on.

FULL-BACK

Too often a side is only too thankful if their full-back gets through his work without actually letting them down badly. That is poor full-back philosophy. The full-back has a definitely positive function in helping his side to win.

What, then, are the requirements of the full-back position? A good player with pace is, in any position, better than a similar player without pace; a good big one is better than a good little one. Both these general maxims apply. Good and accurate kicking, sound hands, and fearless saving and tackling are the special requirements, but there is another which must be equally emphasised, viz., the ceaseless and intelligent following of the ball. This, based on intelligent knowledge of the geography of the field and the run of play, and developed by experience, will give a full-back that accurate sense of position—that bump of locality—without which all his other qualities are but as dust and ashes in his hands. A full-back should never be still for a moment, but should be adjusting his position with every move, and on the tiptoe of expectancy all the time. Only thus can he anticipate where he will be required at any given moment, and, obviously, if he is not where he is required when he is required, neither his fine kicking nor his fearless tackling will be of any use to his side. "The blessed gift of anticipation" is one which every full-back must have, but it is not a gift, it is merely intelligence or commonsense applied to his opponents' moves, whereby, from his knowledge of the game, he knows or guesses how and where his opponents are most likely to attack or move, and, therefore, where he is most likely to be required. He should be continually adjusting his position

to the possible requirements, and, unless the unexpected happens, the result is that he is always at the right spot at the right moment. Spectators often marvel at the way in which a full-back always seems to turn up at the right spot at the right moment. They can't understand how he does it. But they have not been watching the full-back closely. In fact, both they and the full-back have been following the ball intently. That is the explanation of the full-back's success, and of the spectators' failure to understand it.

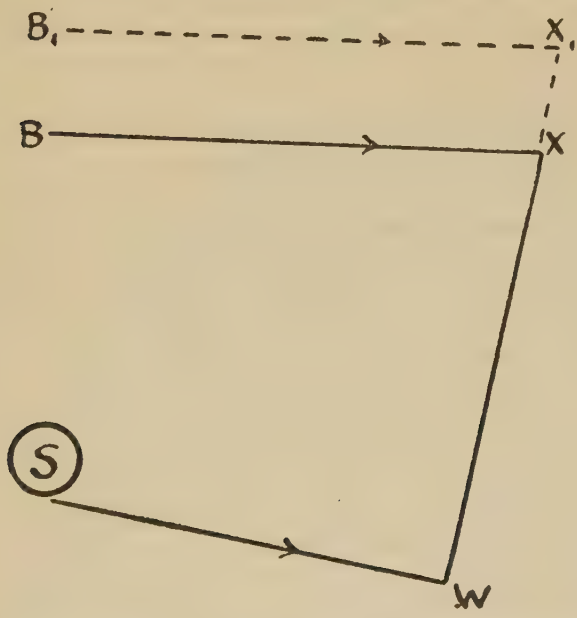
It is in sensing and anticipating the moves of the game that much of the fascination of playing full-back lies ; and much is at stake, for on his anticipation of the run of the game and, in particular, of his opponents' moves, the full back's success or failure depends. If he has judged rightly and by anticipation, which is adjusting his position in relation to his opponents' possible moves, he has gained that fraction of a second which gives him the advantage, the full-back has the initiative and not his attacker. In position and on his balance, he can force the flying wing into the position best suited for a tackle ; or he can pick the ball away from the feet of the stumbling forwards ; or he can field the ball with confidence and find touch unerringly.

If, by lack of anticipation, he has not saved that fraction of a second, he will be doing everything at the last gasp, struggling to recover a lost initiative, instead of having the position in hand and knowing that he has his opponents at his mercy.

An instinct for position, then, is one of the fundamentals of full-back play. Here the full-back has one great advantage, viz., he can choose his own position.

He can lie as far forward or as far back as he finds it most suitable to his pace and abilities. This is the salvation of the moderately paced full-back, for he can make up for his lack of pace by well-judged position. Always he should be as far up as possible, for the quicker an opposition move is nipped in the bud the better, but that general rule must be conditioned by two considerations—(1) He must not be so far up as to risk the ball being kicked over his head ; he must always, if possible, run in towards the ball, and not have to turn round and run towards his own line ; and (2) he must be sufficiently far back to enable him to reach the opposing wing three-quarters if the opposing line gets away. Only a very fast full-back can lie well up, and yet travel across the field to the further away touch line to meet the opposing wing if the ball has been passed rapidly across the field. The further back the full-back is, the greater the distance the wing has to run before he reaches him, or, in other words, the more time has the full-back to cover the distance between his original position and the touch-line. Therefore, the slower the full-back is, the further back must he lie. A reference to a diagram may make this clearer, thus :—B is a defending full-back. The ball travels from the scrum S to the wing threequarter W. B wants to be in such a position that his line across the field will meet the line of the wing threequarter. The distance S W and the distance B X may be taken as constant ; the variable point is B's position. B has got to cover the distance B X in the same time as the ball and W cover the distance S W X. If B is not fast enough to do that his remedy is to stand further back, say at B1. The line between him and the touch line is

no longer than it was, but the line W X is, and W will take longer time to cover the distance WX1, whereas the full-back has only the same distance to cover from B1 as he had from B. As soon as a full-back can gauge



the greatest speed which he is likely to be called up to cope with, which is usually one of the opposing wing threequarters, he should adjust his own position so as to ensure that he can meet and tackle that wing three-quarter somewhere near the touch-line. Having decided on his distance from the scrum, the full-back must be always behind the ball, between it and his own goal line. The ball is always on the move, and so should the full-

back be, and there is enough in continually adjusting his position to keep a keen full-back alive both physically and mentally even in the dullest game.

There is one particular moment when a full-back is often reduced to a sort of paralysis of inactivity, instead of being on the move, and that is when waiting to tackle. He may have got across the field in good time and be able to wait for his opponent, or a centre may be coming straight down the field towards him. In these circumstances a great many full-backs seem to get stuck. They wait for their man. That is a fatal mistake.

By waiting, he allows his opponent to choose his own course, instead of cramping him ; and by not being on the move he loses a fraction of a second whereas his opponent is going hard, for if the full-back is static (and he usually is on his heels, and not on his toes) he requires an appreciable fraction of a second to get on on the move again. He waits to see what his opponent is going to do, and only moves after he has seen, but at that moment he requires a fraction of a second to get going, and in that fraction of a second his opponent has done something, and is a couple of yards further away than he should be.

A full-back should always come in on his man, watching him like a hawk all the time. By so doing he diminishes the space in which the attacker can dodge or swerve ; he is apt to upset the runner, who wonders what the full-back is going to do ; and most important of all, he is on the move ready to hurl himself in whichever direction the man with the ball swerves. The man with the ball is probably desperately anxious to take his eye off the full-back to see if there is anyone to pass to. He daren't

do it if the full back is moving in on him. If the man with the ball does take his eye off the full-back, the full-back should dash in at once. He will be yards nearer his opponent before he gets his eye back again ; the position, from the point of view of the man with the ball, will have suddenly become quite different, and the chances are that he tries to change his intention, but is tackled hard before he can do so. Apparent forlorn hopes when the full-back is faced with two opponents can be turned to brilliance if the full-back comes in on the man with the ball, and the moment he sees the latter lift his eye to see where he is going to pass to, dashes hard at him and hurls himself on him. To wait in such circumstances is fatal.

All that has been said of the necessity of accurate kicking, and the ability to kick readily with either foot, applies especially to a full-back. The greatest part of the average full-back's work is kicking. Sure fielding and an unflickering eye are essential. Tackling and saving are his special functions, while he might usefully practise picking up the ball off the ground both slowly and at speed.

Lastly, the full-back position must never be vacant. If he has had to follow up a kick, or if he has had to join in the attack, or if for any other reason he has had to leave his place, some one else must fall back and fill it temporarily. This duty will usually fall to the three-quarters, but whoever is handy must do it, whenever the full-back is away from his place.

CHAPTER XV.

BACKING UP

ALTHOUGH it is necessary to deal with the different positions of the players in a side separately, it must be emphasised once again that Rugby is played by fifteen men a side and that all are involved in every move of the game, no matter what his position. Scores are actually made by individuals, but it is the work of the whole side which makes these scores possible, and each man in the side must actively realise that he personally has a definite place and duty in every movement.

There are no hard and fast lines drawn between the different sections of the side: each has to join in the common movement whenever opportunity offers. Each must be ready to back up any of the others. If a forward gets away, the backs must support him; if the backs get away, the forwards must support them. They may even have to play in each other's positions. If additional backs are required, forwards must be taken out of the scrum and be prepared to play as backs; if the carrying of a scrum is essential, backs must be prepared to be thrown into the scrum. The side consists of fifteen men and their arrangement in different positions on the field is merely a matter of convenience. It is the side which has to carry the ball to the opponents' line, or prevent the opponents reaching theirs, and all must be prepared to lend a hand whenever required.

Backing up is what binds the whole side together and gives it the strength of unity. It consists in every member of the side making a point of being " on the ball" from start to finish of the game. Obviously, the whole fifteen men cannot be actually on the ball at once ; what is required is that each should be eagerly following the movements of the ball and getting to the position in which he is most likely to be of use. The man with the ball should never be left unsupported. Whoever is in a position to do so, whether forward or back, should be chasing after him ready to take his pass or to consolidate the ground gained. A forward breaking away must be backed up at once whether by forwards or by backs. The man with the ball—whether in his hands or at his feet—should always have a swarm of supporters backing him up ready to carry on the movement. Whenever and wherever the ball moves there should be players following it in addition to the man with the ball Endless opportunities occur to the keen and intelligent backer-up.

Some forwards play as if their work finished with the break up of the scrum ; some backs seem to think that because the forwards are dribbling they need take no further interest. That is all wrong. In each case the position is full of opportunity. The one consuming desire of each player should be to be after the ball as hard as he can. Knowledge of the geography of the field and intelligence in anticipating the run of the game will bring him by the shortest cut to the place where he is most likely to be useful ; and ability to pass, kick, or run straight will enable him to seize the opportunity when it comes.

It is keen, intelligent backing up which, more than

anything else, produces that combined rapidity of movement in the whole side which makes that side a never-ending danger in attack and a baffling obstacle in defence. A side composed of merely moderate players becomes a powerful side and one very difficult to beat if in every move there are others backing up the man with the ball, ready and capable to do the right thing; and the opposition are faced with the difficulty of beating not so many forwards, so many halves, and so many three-quarters, but fifteen wholehearted players, determined tacklers and tireless runners who are always turning up at the right place at the right moment, often so unexpectedly as to upset all calculations and to leave their opponents with the feeling that while they play so many forwards and so many backs, the others are playing all over the place and that there is something unfair about it! There is nothing unfair about it. It simply means that the side has made up for its lack of individual ability by brilliant backing up, and a side that does that is a hard nut to crack. Further, no matter how brilliant the individuals may be, the necessity for backing them up remains the same. It is the team which wins, not separate individuals.

Combination is the essence of the four three-quarter system, but, while that must be emphasised, it must not be supposed that Rugby to-day offers no scope for individual effort. Far from it. Mechanical combination becomes monotonous, and offers no surprises. That is a state into which combination should never be allowed to fall. There is not only a place but a definite call for individual brilliance within the combined effort. The more brilliant individuals there are in the side the better,

provided they are well backed up. Even an erratic genius can be extremely useful. He may not even know himself what he is going to do when he starts, but he may make ground and upset the defence before he is stopped. His individual effort may be brought to nought, but if there is someone up to take his pass and carry on, the gain may be great. Players of individual brilliance are a great asset, but their full value to the side is only got by backing them up; in fact, the results of individual brilliance depend almost entirely on the brilliance of the backing up.

Rugby Football is not a game for routine. The routine movements everybody knows, and knows how to cope with, but the unexpected, the unorthodox is upsetting to any opposition. There is in Rugby an infinite variety of combination and movement. All that is required is that the possibilities should be continually and intelligently explored. Routine will not produce great players, and routine can always be beaten by brains ; and, given a thorough knowledge of the fundamentals, it is by brains and enterprise that sides will not only beat their opponents but also develop great players. A few bright spirits in however poor a team can, by evolving schemes together and putting them into operation on the field, make all the difference to a side. Without enterprise on someone's part Rugby can be as dull as any other game, but given individual enterprise well backed up by keen and able players, and it will be dull neither for one side or the other.

There is no one and only way of playing Rugby football; a side may be full of erratic individuals who seldom use orthodox movements, or it may be full of ordinary

players lacking in individual prowess, but whether the one or the other, it is backing up which will make them a team.

Almost the whole of Rugby may be included under the heading of backing up. When one speaks of good team play one really means good backing up, some one always up on the ball and ready to carry on an attacking move or back to supplement the defence, or on the spot to pick up odd chances. It calls for keen players with active, busy brains always following the ball, thirsting after it, and knowing what to do and where to go when they reach it.

In *Wisden's Almanack* a year or two ago the following statement appeared in the record of a famous Scottish club XV. :—" Of the twenty-three players who took part in the season's campaign the whole were contributors to the score list." The side referred to certainly scored a large number of points that season, but that everyone who played for it got, and took an opportunity of scoring is a remarkable testimony to an understanding and co-operation between backs and forwards, and to an appreciation of the fact that a side consists of fifteen men and not merely so many forwards, so many halves, etc.

There is far too deep-rooted a tendency to delimit the functions of the different players and to regard the side as split up into separate groups each with a separate and exclusive function, to look upon the forwards as mere shovers and dribblers and the backs as the only scoring machine, or the only defenders. Practically every move requires the co-operation of both, and the combined scoring movements of the whole side are the most

dangerous of all. There are, for instance, few finer moves in the whole game than when the forwards have heeled, the ball travels out to the wing three-quarter, and then, when his way is blocked, comes in again and is tossed from hand to hand by a line of eager forwards racing up the centre of the field. Scores are bound to come to the side whose forwards are always up to take the chance of the ball coming in from the wing either by hand or from a kick across. And the same applies to lesser movements when odd members of the side pave the way by seizing a chance and are well backed by their colleagues.

It is the team which combines to score ; it is the team which has to tackle and to prevent scores ; it is the team which has to do everything ; and so long as the ball is in play every member of the team is equally responsible for doing whatever is required at the moment no matter where he plays.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SPIRIT OF PLAY

RUGBY has nowadays become a subject of such widespread public interest that there occasionally arise controversies about it. Most of these have at their root the question of the spirit in which the game is to be played, and it is well to ask why do we play Rugby Football? Many reasons may suggest themselves, but when all is said and done, the answer is "for fun." Rugby is great fun and is played for the fun or the sport of it. It is play, a form of that relaxation of mind and body, and stimulation of physical and mental energy which in varying forms is prescribed for us from the cradle to the grave. Physically and mentally it is stimulating: in character it is developing and a discipline; it is many such things, but when one goes on to the field one wants the fun and excitement of a good game. The analogy of the play of a child has been mentioned earlier, and while the children who play Rugby may often be brawny ones, yet Rugby is merely their play and a Rugby ball merely their toy with which they, in combination with some and in opposition to others, struggle to do certain things.

The more one organises play the less fun it becomes, and the idea of making a business of Rugby is antagonistic to the spirit of playing merely for fun. To be compelled to play by contract, or attracted to play by rewards, is contrary to the spirit of playing for fun. One does not

want rewards: one enjoys the game too much to think of them.

Rugby is not a profession by one's skill in which one can make money or extract fees. Nor should it be a prize competition in which to rivalry is added the spur of money or other awards of value. Into such things the spirit of temptation to win at any price is apt to enter, and the desire to win at any price destroys the joy of playing for fun. Besides, Rugby is a hard game; it can be a rough game; it could very easily become a dangerous game. The spirit of winning at any price is fatal to the spirit of Rugby, and no such spur should be applied to the game. The spirit of playing for fun is alien to all that. Rugby is merely a game played for the pleasure of playing. A hard game certainly, but no dirty tricks to ruin fun by introducing malice; no such cleverness as can only flourish if the referee is not looking. Such cleverness involves doing something which one knows is not allowed —taking a mean and unfair advantage. That is not the idea or spirit of the game. The fun, and difficulty, of the game is doing clever things within the Rules of the Game.

The idea of playing for pleasure is also out of accord with the idea of a game so fast and strenuous that it can only be played by picked and specially trained athletes. Some training is necessary, otherwise playing Rugby is not pleasure but grievous pain and trouble, but Rugby as played for the healthy enjoyment of hundreds of schools and clubs must be limited to what can be played with zest by the ordinary cheerful player who has other things than Rugby to make a toil of. Rugby is his play, not his toil.

On the other hand, anyone who plays in a side must play for the side. There is, however, a type of player who says, "Rugby is only a game, and I only play for pleasure, therefore I shall not bother myself more than necessary." Rugby is only a game, and is played only for pleasure; but that pleasure cannot be merely selfish pleasure. The great inspiration of Rugby, besides the physical joy of violent exercise, is the same as the inspiration of all greatness, namely, an object outside oneself. That object in Rugby is the side, and the side and one's school or one's club demand the best one can give and not merely what one feels like at the moment. Further, it is no real pleasure to play a game slackly or inefficiently. Quite apart from fame, which is immaterial, and the credit of one's school or club, which is not immaterial, the greatest enjoyment to be got out of a game is the endeavour to play it well, and that in Rugby is not a mere matter of brawn and pace, but of brain and enterprise in using fifteen men in combination to outwit the brains and enterprise of other fifteen men. That requires whole-hearted and whole-time service while on the field of play. A player who only bestirs himself when the ball happens to come to him, or by fits and starts only when he feels inclined, is not playing the game by his side, nor is he enjoying the real fun of the game.

To give of one's best, not for glittering rewards but for one's side; to accept the Rules and the referee and to take no unfair advantage of either of them; to lose without rancour, and to win without vainglory; and, win or lose, to enjoy oneself thoroughly, that is all that is required in the game.

CHAPTER XVII.

ON WATCHING RUGBY

THE players of Rugby fifty years ago—and even much less than fifty years ago—may have been content to play their matches without glory or spectators, but the interest in the game is now such that no side is without its followers, and attendances even at club matches often run into large figures, and the increasing place which spectators are taking at Rugby matches make crowds an inevitable accompaniment of the game. What is not sufficiently realised is that spectators have their influence on the game both good and bad.

Crowds can make or mar the spirit of the game as much as, or more than, the players themselves, and with the increase in crowds the time has come when those who make the crowd must realise their responsibilities. No one desires to see Rugby crowds become violent, passion-swept mobs of vociferous fanatics, blind to everything but the virtues of their own side and the criminal futility of the referee. What is the proper function of a crowd and how can it play the game in spirit, so that it may add its quota to the preserving of the traditions of the game clean and pure?

The proper function of the crowd may be defined as the watching, appreciation, and, if so moved, the encouragement by applause of good play. That is all. Everything else is in the hands of the referee. That is

the first thing for spectators to realise and diligently to practise, namely, that they have nothing to do with the referee. Rugby is played as if there were no spectators, the play is entirely a matter for the players and the referee. The referee is a necessary adjunct to the game, and is the sole judge of the play, and of the application to it of the rules of the game. Good, bad, or indifferent, he has been accepted by both sides, and the spectator has nothing to do with the matter. However good he may be, the players take the risk of him not being able to see everything. These are the accepted conditions under which they play, and they neither ask nor desire the interference of the spectator. Spectators who question the referee's decisions or shout instructions to him merely display bad breeding in Rugby sportsmanship. A player who questions the referee's decisions or interferes with him can be, and is, put off the field; spectators who offend in this way cannot be identified by the referee and put out of the ground, but any spectator who takes advantage of this to shout remarks at the referee is as bad a sportsman as the player who does so, and should be made to realise it by his fellow-spectators.

To the referee an ignorant or partisan but vocal crowd is a perpetual menace. A sudden yell is apt to make the whistle leap to his lips and he may involuntarily stop the game when he did not intend to. Nor have the spectators any right to judge refereeing points, for the great majority of them are gathered near the centre of the field, looking across the field from touch-line to touch-line, whereas the play is moving from goal-line to goal-line, and the spectator can seldom see the game from the

proper angle from the referee's point of view. Besides, the referee is there to regulate the game and is the sole judge. The spectator's duty is to confine himself to recognising good play from whichever side it may come. It is but natural that the applause of one's own side should be the more enthusiastic, but few spectators know the pleasure which genuine appreciation gives to a visiting side, or the distaste with which a team takes the field on a ground where it knows that hostility overrules all other considerations with the crowd. There is nothing which imbues the game with a better spirit than for the visiting players to hear a spontaneous and wholehearted outburst of appreciation from their opponents' grand stand. That is the spirit which spectators must learn to preserve, for just as the playing of the game produces men, so the watching of the game must produce sportsmen—and women.

Crowds differ widely both in their knowledge of the game and in sportsmanship. Enthusiastic support of one's own side is good, but if the partisan nature of that support overwhelms the appreciation of good play, the result is a miserable thing and brings the club and its ground into contempt. The objectionable features of a crowd, however, frequently spring from its ignorance of the game, and if every person who proposes to become a spectator would pass a self-denying ordinance on himself that he would not attend a Rugby match until he had read, marked, learned and inwardly digested the rules of Rugby Football, crowds would soon become tolerable and even stimulating, instead of being, as they sometimes are, a continual annoyance to the keen spectator, and a nuisance to the referee. The player of to-day plays the

game for the sake of the game as keenly as anyone, but it is only human nature to prefer to play it, and to play it better, under the stimulating influence of an intelligent crowd and amid the encouraging applause of supporters.

Really to appreciate the game, the spectator should, of course, be an old player. Everyone, however, who watches Rugby to-day is not an old player, and it would add to the spectator's interest and enjoyment if he were to try to appreciate not merely the result of successful effort, but the steps by which success was made possible. It is towards an understanding of the interplay of attack and defence that the spectator should address himself. There he will find an intense interest in his watching, and an interest which can be sustained through every incident of the game, however dull it may seem to his less intelligent neighbour. The difficulties of the non-playing spectator in fully appreciating many of the moves in Rugby are such that the tendency is for him to applaud only spectacular attack, whereas the steps taken to checkmate the attack are equally subtle and worthy of applause. Or the run of a wing three-quarter may elicit enthusiasm, but the real cleverness may have lain in the work of others which made that run merely simple and straightforward. On the one side an opening has got to be made ; on the other side every attempt at an opening must br frustrated, or, if made, it must be blocked. That is the problem of the back-division, and if the spectator realises it, and follows the moves of the players as each side tries to beat the other's strategy he will find much to applaud on both sides, and will develop an interest in the game which will bring him both pleasure and profit from his watching.

After grasping the play of the back division, he has the place of forward play in the scheme of things to

master, and the many uses and moves of the pack. As that requires even more intimate knowledge, it will be realised that the spectator has in following the game itself more than enough to occupy his attention and has no time to exhort the referee.

One thing that spectators are apt to forget is that a side can only play as well as it is allowed to play and that there is another side diligently exercising equal skill and knowledge in bottling the attack. A centre three-quarter, for instance, is often blamed for being tackled with the ball instead of passing; whereas it may have been obvious to him that his wing had no chance, and that he had to make further efforts to make an opening. He may fail and get tackled and, consequently, annoy his supporters, but he was doing absolutely the right thing though the spectators did not realise it. Spectators are very apt to forget the other side.

There is also one rule that spectators should remember and that is the advantage rule which allows the referee to decide which side is likely to gain advantage from an offence. If the offending side is likely to profit by the offence the referee will whistle and order a scrum or whatever is necessary, but if the other side can take advantage of the offending side's mistake, the referee will let them take that advantage, and will not whistle up the offence. Further, the referee is entitled to wait a moment in order to see which side is likely to gain advantage from the offence. If, for instance, a side knocks-on it will not be allowed to profit by that infringement, but if the knock-on sends the ball into the hands of an opponent who can seize the opportunity to benefit his side, the referee will not stop the game for the knock-on. Numerous examples could be given, but the point for spectators to realise is that the referee need

only stop the game when technical infringements are in his opinion likely to benefit the side which makes the infringement.

One point of detail may be referred to, namely, the reception given by spectators to the granting of a free-kick. When in the midst of a game the referee blows his whistle and orders a penalty kick against one side the supporters of the other side only too frequently applaud the decision, as if their side had done something good. The spectator very frequently has no idea why the free kick was given, yet he applauds as if to tell the unfortunate side that they jolly well deserve to be penalised. The offence may have been over-keenness, or a misjudgment of position which had made a player infringe the off-side rule—an accident which may occur in any side at any moment, and the regular penalty is a free-kick; but to cheer a penalty decision only too often gives the side penalised the impression that the spectators think that they have been deliberately and persistently doing unfair things, and that it is high time that they were penalised and justly punished, and it leaves a nasty feeling. The spectator can help to exclude such feelings by refraining from applauding penalty decisions. Rather let him regard them as hard luck on his opponents in having a good move spoilt. In any case, a penalty decision does not come within the definition of good play, and it is only good play that the spectator would wish to applaud.

The spectator, then, is linked to the player in the fellowship of the game by a common bond of guardianship of the spirit of play. To both alike descends the heritage and tradition of that spirit, and it behoves each alike jealously to preserve it, and in no way to offend against it.

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